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Mubarak &Yeltsin, portrait of the week by Bahgory 10

Straight talk in Moscow

Mubarak has secured a Russian commitment to a greater role in Middle East peace-making and closer economic ties. **Nevine Khalil** reports from Moscow

Arriving on a rainy Monday in Moscow for a three-day visit, President Hosni Mubarak had more in mind than simply boosting bilateral economic relations. He wanted to tell Russia point blank, on his first visit since the collapse of the Soviet Union, that it must discharge its responsibility as co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process. Mubarak warned that if Russia continued to "ignore" its relations with the Arab world, they in turn would "gradually forget" Russia.

Mubarak was accompanied on the high-profile visit by senior officials, led by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, and more than 20 Egyptian businessmen.

Meeting with President Boris Yeltsin on Tuesday, Mubarak argued that the obstacles facing the stalled peace process require efforts be made by all world powers if they are to be removed. This was particularly true of Russia, which co-sponsors the peace process along with the United States.

Yeltsin agreed with Mubarak all the way, promising that Moscow's diplomatic agenda would soon include visits by Russian officials, Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov in the near future and Yeltsin himself next year.

"Russia's presence in the Arab world, and in the Middle East in particular, is clearly insufficient," Yeltsin conceded. "We must have a constant high-level presence there."

The Russian president said the deadlock in the peace process was due "mostly to the unconstructive stance of Israel." He defended Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, saying it would be "ridiculous" to blame him for the recent acts of terrorism in Israel.

In a joint statement which Mubarak and Yeltsin signed after their talks, they condemned Israel's policy of establishing settlements in occupied Arab territories and upheld the land-for-peace principle as the basis for bringing the Arab-Israeli conflict to an end.

Mubarak also met on Tuesday with US Vice-President Al Gore, who was paying a visit to Russia. The two had "positive discussions," focusing mainly on bilateral relations and economic cooperation. Gore said. "All the news on the economic side is very positive," Gore added.

Peace-making also featured in their talks, with Gore saying they reviewed the results of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's recent tour in the Middle East.

Russia, mired in its domestic problems, has been less involved in the Middle East than during Soviet times, when it traditionally backed Arab countries in their dispute with Israel. The Soviet Union also provided invaluable assistance to Egypt in building the Aswan High Dam and for major industrial projects, such as the Helwan iron and steel complex.

In a newspaper interview published on the day he met with Yeltsin, Mubarak took Russia to task for distancing itself from the Middle East.

Speaking to the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Mubarak said that "Americans come [to the Middle East] all the time, and Russia — I don't even know how to put it — completely ignores us. It seems to me that it should be just the opposite, you must be the most active people here. You should be active together with the Americans, and this activity must be visible. Especially because we remember very well all the help we received from the Soviet Union. We shall never forget it."

Mubarak warned that "by ignoring our region, you may find yourselves forgotten here."

The Egyptian leader did not confine himself to seeking a revival of Russia's role in the Middle East but also acted to boost the faltering trade relations between the two countries. Yeltsin declared that thanks to Mubarak's "breakthrough" visit, "our relationship has entered a new dimension."

Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov, who took part in the talks, noted that bilateral trade has declined from about $1 billion to $400 million over the past five years. Egypt now has a huge trade deficit with Russia, its exports accounting for only about 10 percent of bilateral trade, Nemtsov said.

The private sectors of the two countries will henceforth hold centre stage in the common effort to cement economic cooperation. The two presidents attended the signing of six agreements on the insurance of exports, the avoidance of double taxation, security coordination, judicial cooperation, scientific research and the creation of a maritime company.

"The prospects for trade with Russia are huge," said Prime Minister El-Ganzouri, affirming that the private sectors of the two countries will play the key role in promoting the trade exchange.

On the last day of the visit, yesterday, Egyptian businessmen were optimistic. They said the foundations for greater trade cooperation had been laid down. What remains to be done now is to establish a reliable database covering the markets of the two countries, they said.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, who accompanied Mubarak on the visit, described its outcome as "positive on all levels, whether political or economic."

Mubarak himself described the trip as a "visit of love, friendship and work."

FIS cease-fire

THE ISLAMIC Salvation Army, the armed wing of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) announced a cease-fire for next Wednesday in Algeria. In a two-page statement dated 21 September and received by news agencies in Paris and Bonn yesterday, top commander Madani Mezerag asked all forces fighting under his command to stop operations as of 1 October and called on other groups to rally to his call in order to unmask and isolate the members of the extremist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) believed to be responsible for what the statement condemned as abominable massacres.

The call, AFP reported, came two days after more than 200 people were slaughtered near Algiers in one of the worst massacres since the Islamist insurgency flared in 1992. Official reports put the death toll at 85 and said foreign news agencies were inflating the casualties.

Army fire

LEBANESE army forces stepped up their operations in the south of the country on Tuesday, firing anti-aircraft guns at Israeli helicopters which were raking a Hizbollah-controlled area bordering Israel's self-styled security zone.

Lebanese troops also fired machine-guns at an Israeli ship sailing in Lebanese territorial waters for the second time in three days.

New envoy

THE US has nominated veteran diplomat Dan Kurtzer as its new ambassador to Egypt to replace Edward Walker who was nominated to occupy the post of Washington's ambassador to Israel.

Kurtzer has a long experience of Middle East politics and served at the US Embassy in Cairo 20 years ago. The new ambassador currently heads the policy-making division of the US State Department.

Egyptian diplomatic sources said that Kurtzer holds "very moderate views on the peace process" and is expected to enhance the "special relations" between Egypt and the United States.

Pele's secret

BRAZIL'S greatest soccer legend and current Minister for Sports, Pele, was in Egypt for a four-day visit to coincide with the finals of the FIFA/JVC U-17 World Championship. His stay included attending a training session for Egyptian youngsters at the Ahli club ground, but he also found time to chat with fans and journalists and reveal, at last, the secret behind that famous name. (see p.19)

INSIDE

Ibrahim Nafie: A glimmer of hope 10
Hassan Nafaa: In the shadow of Oslo 9
Tikva-Honig Parnass: Alive and kicking 9
Eqbal Ahmad: Democracy without democrats 6
Fayza Hassan: A day like any other 14
Terror in Tahrir 2&3
Fruits instead of tenants 8
Like water and air 15



More pressure on Arafat

A SENIOR Israeli official met US envoy Dennis Ross in Washington on Tuesday to discuss reviving the stalled Middle East peace process and said progress was difficult unless the Palestinians cracked down on "terrorism".

Israel's Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said he presented Ross with findings, also published in Israel, that four of five suicide bombers who killed 20 Israelis in two Jerusalem attacks were West Bank Palestinians from the Islamist militant group Hamas.

The meeting was planned as a prelude to talks in New York next Monday between Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas on ways to end the six-month deadlock in peace negotiations. These talks are the only concrete result to come out of the visit to the region earlier this month by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Palestinian officials are to meet Ross later this week in Washington.

Naveh accused the Palestinians of undermining the peace process by failing to carry out commitments in earlier agreements to clamp down on terror. "With a lack of reciprocity, with a lack of implementation by the Palestinian side, it's very hard for me to see how we can proceed in the peace process," Naveh told reporters after three hours of talks with Ross.

The United States reacted to the findings by putting new pressure on Yasser Arafat. "Right now, what we've seen coming out of Israel points up the responsibility of chairman Arafat in the area of terrorism," State Department Spokesman James Rubin said. "A greater effort on the part of Arafat to combat terrorism... can make a difference... because it does appear that the people who committed these acts were, at least at one point, in the hands of Palestinian authorities."

The Palestinian Authority originally said the bombers had come, or at least received assistance, from abroad. Israel claimed on Tuesday that the four came from the village of Asira Shamaliya, which is under Palestinian civilian control and Israeli military control. In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian and Israeli security officials met from midnight Tuesday until early yesterday, in the presence of US representatives, to discuss the matter. (see p.4)



The Necropolis of Alexandria: a view of Tomb I with its many burial niches

photos: Stephane Compoint and Laure Berthier, Sygma

A future for the dead?

A new road has led archaeologists directly to the heart of ancient Alexandria's city of the dead. **Hala Halim** joined them on a journey through time and tunnels

"The excitement of passing through the robbers' passages from one ancient tomb to another, without ever seeing the end, is truly intense." Thus reflected Prof Jean-Yves Empereur a week into excavating one of ancient Alexandria's most significant sites: the Necropolis.

Located to the west of the city in Gabbari quarter, the Necropolis had never previously been investigated. It was over two years ago, in the course of the construction of a fly-over linking Alexandria's Western Harbour with the Desert Road, that a portion of the site was uncovered. Thanks to the intervention of antiquities' inspector Youssri Hassan, work on the fly-over was temporarily halted so archaeologists from the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), and subsequently Empereur's Centre d'Etudes Alexandrines, could intervene.

There is an etymological *frisson*, as it were, to this excavation: the word "necropolis", literally 'city of the dead,' was first coined by Strabo to designate the cemeteries of Gabbari when he visited Alexandria in the first decade of Roman rule. "Strabo was overwhelmed by... their proportions, which were equal to those of the city of the living. Alexandria was the greatest city of antiquity, and if the Necropolis was as big, then its proportions must have been immense," says Empereur.

The two-storey catacombs, hewn out of limestone, had been filled in with rubble. The archaeologists have so far discovered 16 tombs, guided by the pioneering work of grave robbers who had made strategic breaches in the walls. However, since the lower storey of the tomb-complex is flooded with water, Empereur supposes that the tombs it contains may still be intact. *Fortuitously*, too, a shanty town has preserved this part of the necropolis; the rest has probably been destroyed by the foundations of modern buildings. Indeed, one of the tombs being excavated lies directly beneath a group of inhabited shacks.

But if the archaeologists have been travelling in space beneath the city of the living, the tomb-complex has also taken them on a journey through eight centuries. The Necropolis, according to the finds so far, dates back to the second century BC and remained in use until the sixth century AD when it was abandoned after the Arab conquest — further setting it apart from other catacombs found in Alexandria (like those of Anfoushi and Kom El-Shogafa) which were used during only one period. As



General overview of the site

Dr Mervat Seifeddin from the SCA explains, until this excavation, the received wisdom was that cemeteries to the east of the city were Greek in character while those to the west were Egyptian. However, the funerary rites and artistic and architectural conventions seen in this portion of the Necropolis have an undeniably Greek character.

Not only have no mummies been found, but a number of cremation urns (bearing geometrical and floral patterns and two of them carrying Greek names) point to the Greek practice of cremation. Likewise, in one of the skulls found in the myriad loculi, or burial niches, was a coin — the fare for Charon, the ferryman who in Greek mythology rowed the dead to Hades or the after-world. On the surface, a funerary banquet room has been uncovered, part of the Greek tradition whereby the family of the deceased would visit and hold a banquet in honour of the dead on certain days. Wall-paintings, too, reproduce patterns of Ptolemaic architecture. The advent of Christianity is discernible in the pale red crosses painted on the doors of some of the loculi and in a number of St Menas pilgrim flasks, from the nearby monastery. Overall, the tomb-complex seems to have been "middle-class", says Empereur, as there is no sculpture. In one chamber, red lines marking off the position of future loculi, some carrying a number, others a name, show "that space was reserved in advance and that there was a true plan", suggests Empereur.

There remains a stretch of some 200 metres leading up to the fly-over's access ramp, which the archaeologists have been given only a few months to excavate while the issue of "the future of the dead", as Empereur likes to call it, is resolved. That the last phase in the construction of the fly-over will be completed is a foregone conclusion. The question is whether its design will be modified to allow for the preservation of the tomb-complex.

Happily for Alexandria, its new governor Abdel-Salam Mahgoub, in contrast to his predecessor Ismail El-Gawsaqi, has shown a *commitment to conservation issues*. Mahgoub, who has visited the site, has broached the issues with Minister of Housing and Utilities Ibrahim Suleiman at a meeting where they agreed "to develop the area into a tourist site, complete with Roman-style columns," according to Ahmed Abdel-Fattah, director-general of West Delta Antiquities. But for all that, the future of the site remains uncertain. Only when the excavation is complete will the different ministries and the Alexandria governorate meet to try and find a balance between their respective vested interests in this intersection between the city of the living and the city of the dead.

... Fayza Hassa
Mahmoud El-Warda

Terror in Tahrir

Officials insist that the attack on a tourist bus outside the Egyptian Museum was not the work of Islamist militants and, as **Shaden Shehab** reports, there are conflicting reports as to whether one of *the two attackers was mentally ill*



The tourist bus was a blazing inferno after the two brothers hurled 11 petrol bombs inside *(photo: AFP)*



Saber Farahat

A group of 33 German tourists had just seen the Pharaonic wonders of the Egyptian Museum in El-Tahrir Square last Thursday when Saber and Mahmoud Abul-Ela Farahat, firing a pistol and hurling petrol bombs, turned their bus into a flaming deathtrap. Nine Germans and the *Egyptian driver were killed* and six Germans were injured. The others escaped, mostly by breaking a window near the back of the bus and jumping through it.

Around midday, El-Tahrir Square in central Cairo was *bustling with* traffic and pedestrians as usual. It is a prime location for luxury hotels, airlines, companies, bus terminals and, above all, the Egyptian Museum, home to some of the country's greatest treasures. Everything seemed normal. But the Farahat brothers had more deadly plans in mind.

The two had taken off in a pickup truck from their home in Ezbet El-Nakhl, a shantytown north east of Cairo. They abandoned the vehicle before reaching Tahrir Square and continued by taxi, carrying their bags that were stuffed with petrol bombs.

Upon reaching Tahrir Square, they approached the tourist buses which ferry visitors to the museum. Two parked buses were almost empty. But a third was full of German tourists who had just finished visiting the museum.

Saber boarded the bus and took out his pistol but was immediately confronted by the Egyptian tour guide. Saber hit the guide with his pistol on the back of the head and threw him out of the bus. He then shot the driver at point blank range, presumably to prevent him from driving off. Then he opened fire on the tourists. The subsequent investigation showed that his bullets killed three of them.

His brother, Mahmoud, who was carrying 11 petrol bombs, hurled three of them inside the bus. Saber, nearly suffocating from the smoke, had to step over the dead bodies in order to get off. Before disembarking, he casually tossed three more molotov cocktails inside the bus. Mahmoud added five more, three inside, one below, another on top of the bus.

In an instant, the bus was a blazing inferno. *Two bodies, one of them riddled with bullets,* were draped across the steps, and others were sprawled along the aisle inside.

A tourist guide outside the Museum said he heard the attackers crying *Allahu Akbar* (God *is great*).

People were running in every direction, and in the confusion the two brothers attempted to make a getaway. But police Lt. Wael Hussein, who was on guard outside the museum, grabbed a *rank-and-file policeman's automatic* rifle and opened fire. He shot Saber in the back, felling him long enough to be able to arrest him. Mahmoud, in the meantime, tried to escape but was caught by another police officer, *assisted by people who happened* to be at the scene.

Dozens of uniformed and plain-clothes policemen then searched the area, pushing away thousands of onlookers. Armed with riot shields, automatic *rifles and* tear gas canisters, police sealed off roads leading to the area and the surrounding streets, disrupting traffic throughout much of downtown Cairo.

Police, fearing for the safety of tourists, kept the museum's visitors inside until the premises were searched to make sure that none of the attackers had sneaked inside. Taxi-drivers outside the museum rushed the wounded to hospital. The blaze aboard the bus was quickly put out by the police.

The bodies of the nine German holidaymakers were flown home on Sunday. The coffins were taken aboard separate ambulances from the Cairo morgue to the airport, where they were placed aboard a Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt. A private service was held at the airport. Eighteen survivors had already returned to Germany on Friday. The six wounded were discharged from hospital on Saturday and then flown home.

The two assailants were taken by investigators to the scene of the attack before dawn on Saturday to re-enact their crime. They said they wanted to kill foreigners to avenge the act of a Jewish extremist in the West Bank town of Hebron two months ago. Mahmoud said that "Saber convinced me we had to attack foreigners to avenge what an Israeli woman did when she hung up posters depicting the Prophet Mohamed as a pig."

The initial reports on the attack last Thursday *said it was carried out by terrorists. The* number of the assailants was put at three. Two of them were apprehended and the third escaped in a white Peugeot, the initial reports said.

However, this *version of events was* revised on Thursday night. By Friday morning, officials insisted that there were only two assailants who acted on their own and had no connections with organised terrorism. Saber was described as a *mentally deranged man* who had escaped from the Al-Khanka mental hospital three days before the attack. He was placed there, officials said, after he opened fire inside the Semiramis Hotel in October 1993, killing three foreigners and wounding three others.

"The two assailants had no accomplices. Reports that others involved in the attack fled in a waiting car are not true," said Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi. The opposition *newspaper Al-Ahrar* put the number of the assailants at four, while *Rose El-Youssef* magazine said there were as many as seven assailants.

Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif and Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagui said there was no link between the assailants and Islamist militants. The Farahat brothers were quoted as saying that "we acted alone and we are not backed by any religious or extremist groups."

Rose El-Youssef magazine questioned the state's contention that Saber is insane. It argued that it was no coincidence that he attacked *tourists* only a few days after a military court pronounced 72 Islamist militants guilty of a charge of bomb attacks on banks, sentencing four to death and the rest to long prison terms.

On Monday, *Al-Ahram* also raised doubts about the claim that Saber was insane, reporting *that his father paid a hefty amount to* the psychiatrist who issued the certificate stating that he was mentally unstable so that he could avoid going to prison.

The opposition *Al-Wafd*, questioning the *government's account of the attack*, said Saber must have had "organised help" to be able to carry out such a daring attack. "Who protected and sheltered him and who provided him with this arsenal of weapons?" the newspaper asked.

By Tuesday, the claim that Saber was insane had been dropped by the Arabic-language press. Saber confessed, the newspapers said, that his father paid Dr Sayed El-Qott LE50,000 *to issue him the certificate of* insanity. El-Qott, who was arrested, denied the charge. A frontpage story published by *Al-Akhbar* was headlined: "Saber is sane."

The conflicting reports prompted Prosecutor-General Ragaa El-Arabi *to announce* that "prosecutors have not made any statements on the mental state of Saber Farahat. The investigation is not over yet, and this cannot be determined until the investigation is completed."

'Mad? He's not mad. He loves violence'

Frustrated by his failure as a singer, tourist bus attacker Saber Farahat *suffered from depression and may have* found solace in some form of religious extremism

Saber Mohamed Abul-Ela Farahat, 32, is described by his family as a hot-tempered man who began a career as a singer but turned to violence and religious extremism after his first album was a commercial disaster. **Shaden Shehab** tells his story.

Saber was born in Cairo in 1965. He lived with his parents, two brothers and two sisters in the poor neighbourhood of El-Zawya El-Hamra until 1987, when they moved to Ezbet El-Nakhl, a shantytown north-east of Cairo. There they resided in a third-floor apartment in a five-storey makeshift building. The father ran a modest bakery on the ground floor.

Saber did not complete his secondary [high] school education and later enrolled at the Arabic Music Institute, hoping to make a career as a popular singer.

He was drafted briefly into the army, where he reportedly became involved in several fights and scuffles with colleagues and was discharged in 1989 after a medical commission examined him and certified that he was mentally deranged.

After being discharged, Saber, along with his brother Mahmoud, 24, helped their father run the bakery.

But Saber did not abandon the dream of becoming a popular crooner. In 1992, he released his first, and last, album, jointly with an Algerian student at the Music Institute named Chiraz. The album, which included nine love songs, was entitled "Beach and Water."

Having failed to distribute the album successfully in Egypt, he travelled to Saudi Arabia where he managed to persuade a publishing company to promote the album. In return, he was paid $1,000. Returning to Egypt, he made another attempt — successful this time — to market the album locally. He kept these deals secret from Chiraz. When she found out, he reportedly beat her. To make amends, he later surrendered the copyright of two songs to her, as well as 25 per cent of any profits.

But the album was a miserable failure. Saber's relationship with Chiraz also broke up, and he went on to embrace religious extremism. He grew a beard, prayed a lot, branded his father — a devout Muslim — an infidel and forced his sisters to keep the windows shuttered.

Saber first made the headlines on 27 October 1993 when he walked into the coffee shop of the Semiramis Hotel. Having taken a table, he stood up and opened fire on a group of foreigners seated nearby. Two Frenchmen and an American were killed and an American, a Syrian and an Italian were wounded. He was reportedly *shouting Allahu Akbar (God is great) as he* fired. After finishing his gruesome job, Saber threw down the pistol on the floor and said: "Call the police." He waited calmly until the security men arrived. He later justified his actions as an act of revenge for the killing of Bosnian Muslims by Christian Serbs.

Saber was never put on trial because he had his army discharge certificate, showing he was mentally ill. A subsequent examination by psychiatrists at the Abbassiya mental hospital, headed by Dr Sayed El-Qott, *the hospital's director at the time*, confirmed that he suffered from schizophrenia. As a result, he was "confined" in the Al-Khanka mental hospital on 27 January 1994. His father, heartbroken by his son's actions, died shortly afterwards.

But it has emerged that Saber was not literally confined to the hospital. *The investigation* into the bus attack has revealed that he was able to spend long periods outside the hospital compound. Saber told interrogators he would bribe doctors and nurses, even paying some of them monthly stipends, to allow him to leave and return at will. Last April, *he was able to absent himself from* the hospital for as long as 20 days. The reason? He wanted to celebrate his wedding to Samira Mustafa, 21. Some of the hospital's doctors and male nurses were reportedly present at the wedding as guests.

"Saber is a devil," his older sister, Afaf, told *Al Ahram Weekly* at their apartment. "I hope he is cut up into small pieces. I hate him."

Afaf, wearing a *galabiya* and a scarf, continued: "He was always violent with us. Once, he tried to strangle our mother. On another occasion, he threatened to set fire to a butane gas cylinder and burn the house."

She did not believe he suffered from any insanity, however. "Mad? He's not mad. He loves violence," she said, in response to a question.

However, she said that Saber suffered from depression after the failure of his album. "It affected him," she said. "He grew a beard and would beat up his sisters to force them to wear the veil and keep all the windows shuttered."

However, she added: "This does not mean that he was religious. At times, he would curse religion."

As for Mahmoud, Saber's brother, Afaf said that he was the "angel" of the family. How Saber managed to persuade Mahmoud to join him in attacking the bus remains a mystery. But Afaf said that Saber once "promised mother that he would break her heart over Mahmoud. He certainly did."

She explained that Saber and Mahmoud seldom got on, but were usually locked in argument. "He must have brainwashed him," she said sadly.

Accomplices taken into custody

In addition to the two assailants, five alleged accomplices and nine mental hospital staff were taken into custody in connection with the bus attack

Immediately following the bus attack and the capture of the two assailants, state security prosecutors opened an investigation and ordered the arrest of five alleged accomplices and three pshyciatrists and six male nurses at Al-Khanka mental hospital, reports **Shaden Shehab**. But upon President Hosni Mubarak's orders, the investigation was taken over on Tuesday by the Military Prosecutor-General. On Wednesday, he issued a ban, prohibiting the local press and media from carrying any news about the military investigation of the attack.

But the investigation of the nine mental hospital suspects will presumably remain in the hands of civil prosecutors. The nine include three doctors: Sayed El-Qott, Nessim Abdel-Malak and Ahmed El-Haggar.

Saber Farahat, one of the two Farahat brothers who carried out the attack, reportedly told prosecutors that he was encouraged "to attack Jews" by Ahmed Mohamed, one of the five detained accomplices. Mohamed allegedly told Saber that "even if you are caught, you have a certificate proving that you are mad."

Mohamed reportedly showed Saber pictures of the Israeli woman who depicted the Prophet Mohamed as a pig. He is alleged to have provided the Farahat brothers with training in the use of firearms and the making of the petrol bombs used in the attack.

In another version of events, Saber told interrogators that the petrol bombs were of his own manufacture, and consisted of family-size soda bottles filled with kerosene and gasoline. He reportedly said that he and his brother prepared them at his apartment, a day before the attack.

Saber also said that he paid another accomplice LE7,500 for the pistol and some ammunition and bought additional ammunition from two other men.

Saber was also quoted as saying that he supported the Islamist militants but did not join their ranks, fearing the government clampdown. But he sympathised with the ideology of the Jihad group.

Saber's sister was quoted as saying that her brother paid off doctors and employees at the Al-Khanka mental hospital to go in and out as he pleased.

Attiya Gad, a male nurse held in custody, confessed that he received LE100 from Saber to help him leave the hospital on 15 September after he claimed that he suffered from a severe stomach-ache. Saber was accompanied by Abdel-Fattah El-Qassas, another male nurse, who is also in custody.

El-Qassas claimed that Dr Nessim Abdel-Malak, the hospital's manager, knew of Saber's frequent departures. Saber's brother, Mahmoud Farahat, alleged that he saw Saber bribe Abdel-Malak to allow him to leave.

Saber's newly-wed wife, Samira Mustafa, testified that she came to know her husband through his mother, who lived nearby. She said that Saber used to spend two days a week in the hospital, and denied that he was mentally deranged. She described him, however, as hot-tempered and said he beat her on certain occasions. A day before the attack, she said Saber gave her LE5,000 on the grounds that he might be kept in hospital for a long period.

Militants conspicuously silent

The fact that none of the militant groups has claimed responsibility for the bus attack would appear to corroborate official assurances it had no relation to organised terrorism. **Khaled Dawoud** reports

Most observers found it difficult to believe at first that last Thursday's bus attack, in which nine German tourists were killed, was the act of a mentally-deranged individual. The fact that police, in their initial reports, referred to the attack as a "terrorist operation," fuelled suspicion that this was the work of the underground Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, which has targeted foreign tourists in the past.

But a week after the attack, none of the militant Islamist groups had claimed responsibility. According to experts, the Gama'a does not carry out attacks without claiming responsibilty because otherwise they would be meaningless. "The Gama'a militants target foreign tourists not only to damage the Egyptian economy, but also to send a message to the outside world that they are still here and able to carry out attacks despite government repression," said one expert.

But there was also positive evidence that the Tahrir square attack was not an act carried out by an organised underground group. First, due to strong police pressure, Gama'a activities have been confined for the past two years to southern Egypt. The Gama'a *militants* recognise that their chances of carrying out attacks in the capital and escaping arrest are minimal because of the strong police presence. In a similar attack against a tourist bus shortly after the Gama'a started its violent campaign to overthrow the government in late 1992, the attackers used a time-bomb to ensure their safety. On no occasion have they carried out an attack in the middle of the day. In previous attacks against tourists, Gama'a militants targeted trains and Nile cruisers as they passed through isolated areas in order to make sure they would be able to escape.

Nor were the arms seized with the two attackers, Saber Farahat and his brother Mahmoud, the kind of weaponry usually associated with militant groups. According to police, an American 9 mm pistol, nearly a dozen Molotov *coctail* bombs and two knives were all the two brothers had prepared for the attack. Gama'a militants usually use automatic rifles in their attacks, so they can inflict maximum losses and then facilitate their escape by shooting in the air to scare away passers-by.

Islamist lawyer Monstasser El-Zayyat, who has exerted intense efforts over the past two months to convince the government to consider the so-called cease-fire initiative announced by jailed Gama'a leaders, vehemently denied that the Gama'a might have been behind the attack. He said that the Gama'a had given up attacks against tourists since April 1996 when 18 Greek tourists, believed by the assailants to be Israelis, were killed by mistake. The Gama'a at that time said it wanted to avenge Israel's massive attack against Lebanon and the killing of more than 100 civilians who sought *shelter in a UN camp at the village of Qana* in southern Lebanon.

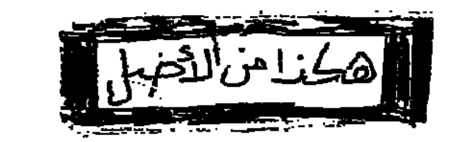
Egypt's largest Islamist group, the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, denounced the attack against the German tourists. A statement issued by the group said that such attacks had nothing to do with Islam.

In a telephone interview with Yasser Serri, an Islamist militant leader who has been living in London since he was sentenced to death in 1994 for his involvement in an assassination attempt against former Prime Minister Atef Sidki, he too denied that militant groups were behind the attack. Serri has been running the Islamic Observation Centre to defend militants and call for their release.

"This is an illegitimate act," he said. "Islam does not allow the killing of innocent civilians and this kind of attack does not serve any purpose or cause," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

In a statement released hours after the attack, the Observation Centre expressed "its deep sorrow and pain for what happened today in front of the Egyptian Museum." The statement emphasised that Islam clearly prohibited Muslims from killing those who belong to a different faith, so long as they did not commit any acts that threatened the Islamic religion.

Serri added that responsibility for the attack lay with "those who allowed a crazy man like Saber to leave hospital despite the fact that he killed foreign tourists before in the Semiramis [hotel]."






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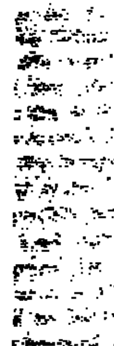
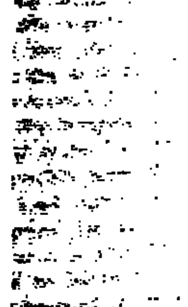
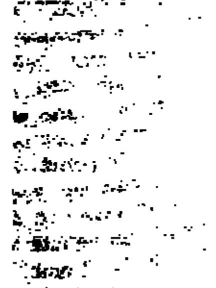
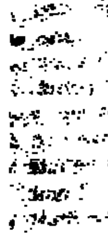
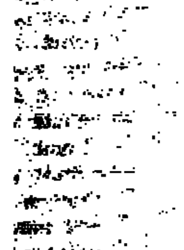






photo: Salah Ibrahim

After the attack, thousands of onlookers were on site, while police sealed off roads and surrounding streets

Tourism shaken, but how much?

A few weeks may have to pass before the full impact of the recent assault on tourists becomes clear. **Sherine Nasr** investigates

Although tourists continued to flock this week to Cairo's historic sites in their usual numbers for the time of year, some cancellations were reported by tourism companies.

The Egyptian Museum, outside which the attack took place, received 4,633 visitors, the majority of whom were foreigners, last Sunday, the usual figure for the season.

"There was a slight drop in the number of visitors on Friday, the day after the attack, but the number picked up on the following days," said Sabah Abdel-Razek, a museum guide. Security precautions were stepped up, with more policemen posted inside and outside the museum.

Yet tourism companies, some of which have received cancellations already, are apprehensive. "We had a cancellation from a group of 140 tourists who were due on 10 October," said Ashraf Amin, tourism manager at Amenophis. "The company has also received many faxes expressing anxiety over coming to Egypt. One tour operator asked to come and see for himself," he said.

The majority of tourism companies, however, believe that the impact of the attack on tourism will only be fully felt in a few weeks' time.

Mohamed Hazem from Spring Tours, owners of the targeted bus, said his company had not received any cancellations, but conceded that some should be expected.

"Although the victims were German, the attack is likely to affect the entire European market," said Hazem. Alluding to an attack on Greek tourists on Pyramids Street in Giza in April 1996, he said other nationalities at the time felt it was unsafe to come to Egypt. "Tour operators hardly ask about the nationality of the victims. All they care about is whether or not the attack was pre-planned," said Hazem.

A large number of cancellations may force local travel agencies to lower their prices in order to encourage tourists to come. "This will most probably encourage Russian tourists and tourists from Eastern Europe to visit the country, taking advantage of the discounts," said Amin.

Germans, who rank first among world travellers, have become an important source of tourism revenue for Egypt, with no less than 500,000 tourists visiting the country annually. "Germany is a very important market for the majority of the travel agencies," said Salwa from Spring Tours. "If the German market is shaken, we will have to focus our efforts on other European markets," she said.

The tourists' reaction to the attack was mixed. Lois Lee from Missouri said: "I would have been greatly disappointed had we not been able to visit the museum. How could you come to Egypt and not see King Tutankhamun's collection?"

Alfred Beulmann, a retired tax accountant from Frankfurt who visited the museum after Thursday's attack, said: "There was a strong security presence everywhere we went." Although Beulmann felt safe in Egypt, he was glad he was leaving the following day.

The Ministry of Tourism sent a message to tour operators abroad stressing that Egypt is safe to visit and that what happened was a "random criminal act." Moreover, all tourism companies were asked to send faxes to the tour operators they deal with, explaining what happened, the number of those killed and injured and the measures taken by the police to contain the situation. "The faxes were highly appreciated by tour operators who felt that we were not trying to hide any information from them," said Hazem.

Hazem explained that tour operators abroad may want to continue sending groups to Egypt. "But if their clients are not inclined to visit the country, they will have to provide them with alternative destinations so as not to lose them. Visiting a certain country is an entirely personal decision. It is the people who decide whether or not to go to a certain place," said Hazem. He added that tour operators can make the same profits by sending their groups to Tunisia, Greece or Turkey. "Or else, they will have to refund whatever money clients paid in advance."

In the meantime, the Egyptian Travel Agents Association, headed by Ilhami El-Zayyat, recommended a wide-scale publicity campaign to be launched abroad by a specialised company. "It should be made clear that what happened was an individual act," he said.

El-Zayyat stressed the importance of hearing from the major travel agents dealing with Egypt as well as the tourist groups, in order to come up with practical solutions. "A proposal that calls for insuring tourists coming to Egypt should now be taken more seriously," he said.

In a statement on Tuesday, the third since the attack, the Tourism Ministry lashed out at international news organisations for describing the attack as "organised terrorism" carried out by Islamist extremists. The statement insisted that the assailants had no relationship whatsoever with any political or terrorist organisations.

Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagui told reporters it was too early to assess the impact of the attack on tourism "which is a complicated industry involving present and future programmes." He cautioned against overestimating or underestimating the consequences of the attack.

El-Beltagui confirmed that there were "limited" tourist cancellations, but added that the "present is not always a reliable guide to the future."

Mubarak slams Ras Al-Amud land-grab

President Mubarak has compared the takeover of Arab buildings in East Jerusalem to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak, declaring violence to be a world-wide phenomenon, said on Sunday that last week's attack on a tourist bus in central Cairo should not have a negative impact on tourism in Egypt.

Mubarak, drawing parallels between Jewish settlement activities in Arab East Jerusalem and Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, said he would not pardon an Israeli who has been convicted in Egypt of spying and expressed the hope that Russia would play a greater role in Middle East peace-making in the near future.

Mubarak made his remarks after inaugurating a new section of the underground metro line connecting three principal squares in the heart of the capital — Ramses, Ataba and Tahrir.

Asked whether the attack on the bus, in which nine German tourists and the Egyptian driver were killed, would affect tourism negatively, Mubarak responded: "It should not... Violence is a world-wide phenomenon... Even in the states where measures are taken, crimes of violence occur."

Replying to another question about a compromise which Binyamin Netanyahu's government reached with Jewish settlers who occupied two buildings in the Arab quarter of Ras Al-Amud in Jerusalem, Mubarak said he was not aware of all the details. But he quoted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as saying the compromise was "a manoeuvre and a game which they are playing."

Mubarak then added: "Let us wait and see what will happen. Is it really a manoeuvre? Does it make sense that the Palestinians leave their homes so that they may be taken over by others? What is the difference between this and the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait?"

Under the compromise, which both the Palestinians and Israeli peace activists rejected, the settlers who took over the two buildings were replaced by Jewish seminary students.

Asked about a declaration by President Bill Clinton that big steps were needed to salvage the peace process, Mubarak replied: "All that I can say is that these steps must be taken by Israel. They talk about security. We are for security in every part of the world. But there will be no permanent security until there is a just solution..."

Mubarak also said he would not pardon Azam Azam, an Israeli of Druze origin, who was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by a Cairo court which found him guilty of spying. The sentence triggered an angry reaction in Israel, with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu questioning the soundness of Egyptian justice.

"The Egyptian judiciary is one of the cleanest and most just judicial systems in the world," Mubarak responded. "Israel made many mistakes in handling this matter and it should shoulder the responsibility. There is nothing I can do. I have only made collective pardons since I took over, but a specific individual? Why should I pardon this one and not another?... They [Israel] made a mistake. They made a wrong assessment of the situation. They acted arrogantly."

Answering another question on his visit to Moscow that began on Monday, Mubarak said: "Russia is a co-sponsor of the peace process along with the United States. I hope that Russia will play an active role."

Mubarak also said he received assurances from Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, at their Alexandria meeting last week, that a Turkish-Israeli naval exercise planned for mid-November would be restricted to search and rescue operations. "I hope that it will be a search and rescue exercise. I conveyed these words to Syria. Turkey also made some remarks about Syria which I conveyed to the Syrian side. The Syrians affirmed that they are not working against Turkey. I hope that they will reach an understanding, a solution," Mubarak added.

The construction cost of the Ramses-Ataba-Tahrir section of the metro line, which Mubarak inaugurated, amounted to LE180 million, and will serve a daily average of 200,000 commuters. Officials said that Cairo's subway network, connecting Helwan in the south with El-Marg in the north-east and Shubra El-Kheima in the north with Tahrir in central Cairo, has cost LE12 billion to date.

A daily average of 1.5 million passengers make use of this network. This number will rise to 2.5 million with the completion of the second line, which will cross the River Nile after Tahrir Square, serving Cairo University and then Giza railway station.

The other culprits

photo: Aref Saadeddin



The main gate of Al-Khanka mental hospital was locked and guarded by state security officers after the attack

Gross negligence and possible corruption at the Khanka mental hospital were indirectly blamed for the bus attack. **Mona El-Nahhas** reports

Accusing fingers were pointed at Al-Khanka mental hospital, just north of Cairo, after it was officially announced that one of the patients confined there, Saber Farahat, had sneaked out to stage last Thursday's deadly attack on a tourist bus outside the Egyptian Museum. The hospital's management and staff were not only accused of gross neglect of duty but also of corruption, which made it possible for Saber, as well as other criminals, to leave the hospital and engage in illegal activities.

Saber was placed in the hospital in January 1994 on the authority of a medical certificate prepared by Dr Sayed El-Qott, then director of the Abbasiya mental hospital, after he opened fire inside the Semiramis hotel, killing three foreigners and wounding three others.

In his report, El-Qott diagnosed Saber as schizophrenic, suffering from religious and political delusions. Filled with hatred for the political regime because it does not apply Islamic law, Saber may use violence to change it, El-Qott said. He added that Saber should not be held responsible for his actions.

Although Saber told interrogators that his father paid El-Qott LE50,000 for the certificate, the psychiatrist denied the charge, insisting that the certificate was issued after thorough tests were carried out on Saber. El-Qott said that he had not followed up Saber's condition since issuing the certificate and it might have changed since then. He described Saber as psychologically disturbed but not mentally deranged and, reversing what he said in the original report, insisted that he should be held responsible for his actions.

The allegation of corruption was not confined to El-Qott. Saber claimed that he used to pay a monthly stipend to Dr Nessim Abdel-Malak, the hospital's director who was removed following the attack, in order to allow him to leave the hospital for several days each month. Attiya Gad, a male nurse who is under arrest, backed Saber's allegation. But Abdel-Malak denied the charge, insisting that Saber left the hospital without the management's knowledge.

In addition to El-Qott and Abdel-Malak, a third doctor and six male nurses have been arrested on suspicion of corruption.

Saber was not the only patient who could leave the hospital at will. According to reports in the Arabic-language press, some patients with a police record, such as drug traffickers, enjoyed similar freedoms.

Dr Mansour Moukhtar, who replaced Abdel-Malak as the hospital's manager, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he will not introduce new measures but will simply enforce regulations that have been long neglected. "A tight security system will be enforced at the hospital's gate and on the wards housing patient-convicts," he said. "There will be fixed visiting hours and the system of allowing patients leave of absence will be curtailed."

The hospital regulations allow the general manager to give certain patients leave of absence during daytime hours, provided they are accompanied by a male nurse and provided that they return on the same day. If a patient fails to return, police should be informed immediately.

A few days after the attack, the situation at the hospital appeared to have changed already. The main gate was locked and guarded by state security officers. Police patrol cars roamed the hospital's sprawling grounds.

Saber was said to have left the hospital on 15 September, three days before the attack, without getting leave permission. He was accompanied by Abdel-Fattah El-Qassas, a male nurse. Saber told interrogators he received a telephone call from the hospital staff on 16 September, asking him to come back. The staff were embarrassed because police had arrested another patient who had fled the hospital. According to one published version, this made Saber rush to carry out his plan to attack the bus.

According to Dr Mohamed Shaalan, a professor of psychiatry, a patient suffering from schizophrenia is capable of planning a crime because he is not insane all the time. "They are also capable of influencing normal people," he said.

Shaalan believes that Saber was completely sane when he attacked the bus and should be held responsible.

Al-Shaab faces criminal charges

The prosecutor-general has exonerated the interior minister and is pressing criminal charges against his detractors

PROSECUTOR-General Raga'a El-Arabi ordered on Monday that Magdi Ahmed Hussein, editor-in-chief of the opposition *Al-Shaab* newspaper, and five other journalists be put on trial before a criminal court on charges of slandering Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi. The six were accused of insulting El-Alfi and publishing false information about him and the police force.

In addition to Hussein, the charges were pressed against his uncle, Adel Hussein, Salah Bedeiwi, Mohamed Hamdi El-Shami, Hoda Makkawi and cartoonist Essam El-Sharqawi.

For several weeks running, the twice-weekly *Al-Shaab*, mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, has conducted a fierce campaign targeting El-Alfi. The minister reacted by filing a complaint with the prosecutor-general, accusing the newspaper's chief editor and the others of libel and slander.

At El-Alfi's request, the prosecutor-general opened an investigation, but *Al-Shaab*'s campaign continued, prompting the prosecutor to issue an order on 2 September banning the publication of news about the progress of the investigation.

Again, *Al-Shaab* was undeterred. The prosecutor took the matter to the judiciary, which ordered the suspension of *Al-Shaab*'s publication for three successive issues, beginning from 12 September.

El-Arabi told reporters his investigation proved that the actions attributed to El-Alfi by the newspaper were untrue. The articles and cartoons published by the newspaper also included insults and slander, he said.

The action of the defendants is legally defined as a misdemeanour but since it targeted a public official, they will face trial before a criminal court, in accordance with the law, El-Arabi said.

El-Arabi added that he was not in favour of suspending the publication of any newspaper, but in the case of *Al-Shaab*, "there had to be a pause so that everybody should learn how to respect the decisions of the judiciary."

The indictment bill stated that the two Husseins, Bedeiwi and El-Shami, in eight successive issues of *Al-Shaab* between 25 July and 22 August, slandered and insulted the Interior Minister and attributed to him actions which, if true, would have meant he was liable to legal punishment, as well as making him the laughing-stock of his compatriots.

The bill accused Magdi Hussein, Bedeiwi and Makkawi of insulting the police and falsely attributing actions to some of its departments that sullied its reputation.

Bedeiwi was further accused of "deliberately publishing false and malicious information with the aim of undermining public order and harming the public interest," for alleging that the police had been infiltrated by a foreign intelligence service and claiming that they covered up the smuggling and cultivation of narcotics.

El-Sharqawi was accused of publishing cartoons insulting to El-Alfi.

The bill, citing El-Alfi's testimony, said the minister denied the newspaper's allegation that he made a hefty profit by selling a sea-side villa near Alexandria to Abdel-Wahab El-Habbak, a former public sector official who was sentenced to imprisonment for abuse of influence and profiteering.

The bill said that Ahmed Mohamed El-Wakil, the board chairman of an import and export company, testified that he owns a villa located next to El-Alfi's. When El-Alfi expressed a wish to sell his villa, El-Wakil was quoted as saying that he conveyed this wish to Fouad Abu Zeghla, then industry minister. The latter telephoned El-Wakil afterwards to inform him that El-Habbak was prepared to buy the villa. The villa and its contents were later sold to El-Habbak for LE600,000.

According to the bill, El-Wakil testified that El-Alfi and his family were not aware of the identity of the buyer until the sale was clinched. Abu Zeghla corroborated El-Wakil's testimony.

A third witness, former police Maj. Gen. Maamoun El-Azab denied an allegation by *Al-Shaab* that he had filed a lawsuit against El-Alfi and the Interior Ministry.

Following the publication of the indictment bill, the ban on the publication of news about the case was lifted.

The journalists, if convicted, could face up to a year's imprisonment.

Earlier, Hussein received a one-year suspended prison sentence plus a total of three years imprisonment in separate cases brought by El-Alfi's son, Alaa. He has appealed against the imprisonment sentences. If he loses, he will have to spend four years behind bars.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Regaining the high ground

Israel's discovery of the suicide bombers who killed 20 Israelis in two separate incidents in Jerusalem has given Binyamin Netanyahu the opportunity to steal a march on Yasser Arafat, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

*One week after surviving the debacle of the es*tablishment of an "unapproved" Jewish settlement at Ras Al-Amud in occupied East Jerusalem, Israeli leader Binyamin Netanyahu snatched back the political high ground from Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA). "We have a high degree of certainty that the perpetrators [of the Jerusalem suicide bombings on 30 July and 4 September] came from the Palestinian areas. They did not come from abroad," Netanyahu told reporters in Jerusalem on 23 September.

Within hours, Netanyahu's "certainty" appeared to be proven with the publication by Israel's Shin Bet intelligence service of the identities of four of the five suicide bombers responsible for the two Jerusalem blasts. The four are all Palestinians in their twenties from Assera Al-Shamaliya, a West Bank village situated north of Nablus. They are also, according to the Israelis, fugitives belonging to the Islamist Hamas movement, wanted by Shin Bet for their alleged involvement in a shooting attack on the Israeli army in the West Bank last December and by the PA following their escape from Nablus prison in September 1996. The four had been arrested by the PA following the suicide attacks in Israel in February-March 1996.

Shin Bet's positive identification of the bombers is the fruit of a massive and ongoing military operation launched last weekend throughout the West Bank. Deploying paratroopers, undercover agents and border police, the sweep has so far picked up over 100 Palestinians, mostly on suspicion of belonging to Hamas. But *the focus of Israel's crackdown was Assera Al-*Shamaliya, a small village of about 7,000 people.

Currently under curfew, residents speak of soldiers interrogating hundreds of Palestinians and arresting dozens while food and medical shortages are increasing due to the tight siege the army has imposed on the area. Parents of the alleged bombers, who expressed disbelief that their sons were behind the suicide attacks, say Israeli soldiers took blood samples from them ten days ago. It was the positive identification between these and the bombers' DNA that led Shin Bet to their quarry, according to Israeli press reports.

Under Oslo's taxonomy, Assera Al-Shamaliya is in area B, where the PA enjoys civic jurisdiction but Israel has overall responsibility for security. Despite this formal "dual control", there appears to *have been little "security coop*eration" between Israeli and PA military forces in tracing the alleged bombers. According to Israeli and Palestinian press reports, the only role afforded to the Palestinian police in the village was an army instruction to "stay inside their police stations and not to interfere". The PA's West Bank head of Preventive Security, Jibril Rajoub, told Israeli TV on 23 September that his force "had been kept in the dark" over the operation in Assera Al-Shamaliya.

If Shin Bet's identifications are accurate, it is bad news for the PA and especially Yasser Arafat. Ever since the first suicide attack in July, the PA has insisted that the bombers came from abroad, with Arafat going so far as to suggest that the Lebanese resistance movement, Hizbollah, was a possible suspect. As late as 23 September, PA Presidential Adviser Ahmed Tibi was claiming that "the suicides came from outside the territory of the PA and under the nose of Mr Netanyahu".

With Israel's publication of the four names, however, the tone changed. PLO executive member Mahmoud Abbas, aka Abu Mazen, accused the Israelis of "purposely misleading" the PA as to the whereabouts of the bombers. He also stressed that Al-Shamaliya was under Israel's security jurisdiction and not the PA's. Israel countered by saying that the names of the four alleged bombers had been included in a list of 88 "wanted persons" given to the PA after the first suicide attack in July.

One week before a slated meeting in Washington between Abbas and Israel's Foreign Minister David Levy, the diplomatic fallout from Shin Bet's disclosures is likely to benefit Israel and harm the PA. Israeli negotiators will exploit their claim that the bombers came from the West Bank to emphasise that the main "obstacle" facing the Oslo process is "terrorism" and the PA's inability or unwillingness to fight it. Should the Americans accept this emphasis — as they almost certainly will — whatever political benefit Arafat accrued out of the incident of the Jewish settlement at Ras Al-Amud will be lost in the face of the propaganda coup Israel will mount out of the identification of the alleged bombers of Assera Al-Shamaliya.

As for Palestinians, especially those imprisoned in Assera Al-Shamaliya, their mood was best summed up by the Palestinian Member of Knesset from Israel's Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash), Hashem Mohamed, on 23 September. Faced with curfews, mass arrests and an Israeli soldier on every corner, what the Palestinians are experiencing today is neither peace nor security, but "a renewed occupation", said Mohamed.


Young Palestinian women shout slogans during a demonstration against the Jewish settlement in Ras Al-Amud in Arab East Jerusalem *(photo: Reuters)*

The return to protest

Peace Now, long dormant, has once again taken to the streets. The movement's secretary-general, Mossi Raz, spoke to **Graham Usher** in Jerusalem

The takeover of two houses by Jewish settlers in the Palestinian village of Ras Al-Amud in occupied East Jerusalem triggered a revival of Israel's premier peace movement, Peace Now (PN). On news of the takeover, PN activists *together with local Palestinian* groups and PLO leader, Faisal Husseini, established a peace camp alongside the occupied houses. And, on 17 September, a joint demonstration was held in the village at which around 1,500 Israelis and Palestinians participated.

What is Peace Now's opinion of the agreement reached between Netanyahu and Irving Muskowitz over the settlement at Ras Al-Amud?

We oppose it. It is an agreement between Israel's right-wing and extreme right-wing. It holds no significance for the supporters of peace in Israel or for the Palestinians or for the world. It is a deal cooked up between Muskowitz and Netanyahu.

For us, there can be no compromise. There is either going to be a Jewish settlement in Ras Al-Amud or there is not going to be a settlement. Whether the settlers are three Jewish families or ten Jewish students is meaningless. One settler in Ras Al-Amud is enough to turn Ras Al-Amud into an Israeli military camp.

The US has endorsed the Ras Al-Amud agreement. What can PN do to keep the issue in the headlines?

We cannot do much. We have kept Ras Al-Amud in the news for over a week in Israel and internationally. But it will be dif*ficult to maintain this. As you* say, the Americans have accepted the deal. And while the Palestinians have rejected the agreement, they haven't called for a mass protests against it.

We will *continue to protest* the settlement at Ras Al-Amud. But we will have to decide whether it is more effective to maintain the peace camp at Ras Al-Amud or to organise protests elsewhere in Jerusalem and Israel. So I cannot say PN will stay as long as we are effective.

The settlement at Ras Al-Amud appears to have reactivated PN after a period of relative quiet. Why is this?

I think this is a matter of time and place. Six months ago, PN tried to mobilise Israelis against the Har Homa settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim. We failed. PN's role in the protests against Har Homa was not seen as significant by either the media or the Israeli public.

But at Ras Al-Amud it was a case of a new Jewish settlement being established in the heart of a Palestinian village, of hundreds of Israelis coming to our peace camp every day and of 1,500 Israelis and Palestinians participating in a demonstration here.

So we managed to grab a share of the headlines for a week because of the specific nature of the issue.

***But does PN's protests reflect a* new mood among Israelis, and especially the peace camp, that the peace process is now in very real danger of collapsing?**

It is true the general feeling is *that the peace process is coming* to an end. With the Rabin/Peres government, people believed things were moving in the right direction. Even after Netanyahu came to power — and particularly after his government approved the Hebron redeployment — the dominant sense was that the peace process had a momentum that couldn't be stopped.

It is only in the last few months that this mood among Israelis has changed. The sense now is that not only is the peace process collapsing, but that we are drifting toward war. This may not be a conventional war with the Arabs, but rather a guerrilla war between Israel and the Palestinians.

We face two problems in trying to build on this mood. First, most Israelis still hold the Palestinians responsible, and not the Netanyahu government, for the drift to war.

Second, even among those like the Israeli peace camp who hold the government responsible, there is a mood that nothing can be done to force Netanyahu to change his policies.

This mood is very difficult for PN to overcome. If PN has managed to mobilise at least some Is*raelis over Ras Al-Amud, it is* despite these factors, not because of them.

We are approaching the 10th anniversary of the Palestinian *Intifada, which galvanised PN* into becoming a force in Israeli politics. How do you assess the performance of the Israeli peace movement over the last ten years?

Looking back, I think the gravest error the Israeli peace movement made was over the question of Jewish settlements. We fought the settlers and organised demonstrations against them. But we never fully realised just how dangerous the settlements and the settler movement were to the peace process.

Even during the Rabin/Peres government, the numbers of settlers increased by around 40 per cent. The result is there are now 160,000 settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It is going to be very difficult to remove them or to even remove some of them. We are living with the consequences of this error now that the Israeli peace movement did not or could not stop the settlements.

Real thinking before peace

Nabil Amr, Yasser Arafat's adviser, a member of the Supreme Palestinian Committee supervising negotiations with Israel and a parliamentary deputy representing Hebron, spoke to **Tarek Hassan,** in Gaza, about his assessment of the current situation in the peace process

Four years after Oslo, what has been achieved?

Many important things have been achieved. What is more important, however, is what has not been achieved. The establishment of the Palestine National Authority with full sovereignty over Palestinian towns and limited Israeli presence in villages, the return of thousands of Palestinians, and mutual recognition are among the achievements.

Peace and security for both sides, fulfilment of the interim agreements, the start of the final-status negotiations and the establishment of new *regional and international relations, particularly* between the Arabs and Israel, have not been brought about.

So how do you view the situation at this point?

The Oslo Accords, with all their details and the realities they created, still exist. But we are witnessing an Israeli retreat from Oslo's principles. Security concerns are being pushed forward as a priority in order to bypass the interim agreements and to move straight to final-status talks.

Meanwhile, there is a total lack of trust between the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli government. The relationship between the two sides is characterised by growing animosity, and the collapse of the whole experiment seems imminent.

This is the reality four years after Oslo. The situation is very complicated, and taking any unplanned steps could have grave consequences. At the same time, all efforts to save the peace process have failed.

It is also clear, following the latest American effort [the visit by US Secretary of State Alb*right to the region] that the traditional formulas* are no longer effective in the present crisis. The Americans, who ignored the developments in the region for months, now face a more complicated situation, and US attempts are more likely to fail than to succeed, especially if we are talking about immediate success.

What is to be done, in that case?

It is of little use to put Oslo on trial and say that, if we had done this and that, the situation would have been better. Oslo is no longer a subject of controversy in political salons, it is a political reality.

What is useful is to consider the realities after Oslo and to define solutions in light of this new reading.

Let us start with what is more important in this *game, namely security and terrorism. It is the Israe*li method of dealing with terrorism which encourages violence. Israel, which has failed in its fight against terrorism since its creation as a state, is now reacting by suppressing the Palestinian peace camp.

This means giving the Palestinians a reason to *lose hope in peace and granting them the right to* look for other alternatives at a time when some are originally inclined to support violence and terrorism.

If Palestinians were being requested to fulfil their obligations in combating terrorism, they would not hesitate in doing so. But in return, we must receive a similar commitment that Israel will fulfil its own obligations in the framework of the wider peace project.

It is at this point that moving to final status issues becomes more important. Palestinians, as a matter of principle, are not against this approach because this was originally a Palestinian idea. But we would have reservations if the plan to move to final status talks was carried out according to the Israeli agenda and the limits they have set for the final settlement.

The problem right now is that Israel does not *know how to deal with us and with peace. The sit*uation requires them to do some real thinking in a different way if we are to achieve different results from those we have right now.

Human bargaining chips

The plight of 150 Lebanese prisoners, held for years without charge or *trial in the notorious Khiam camp in Israel's* self-proclaimed security zone in south Lebanon, continues despite international protests. **Zeina Khodr**, in Beirut, *investigates*

Despite protests made by the Lebanese government, *international organisations and human* rights groups, Israel continues to hold captive some 150 Lebanese at the notorious Khiam detention centre in occupied south Lebanon, while at least 21 are held in Israeli prisons.

Those detained are held indefinitely and many have spent up to 10 years in the camp without charge or trial. In clear breach of international human rights standards, the prisoners are denied access to lawyers and medical care. Maltreatment and torture are systematic.

In late July, a delegation from the prominent human rights group, Amnesty International, end*ed a one-week independent fact finding mission* in Lebanon without being able to visit the Khiam camp because Israeli authorities denied them permission to enter its self-proclaimed security zone.

Serge Thibodeau, the Middle East coordinator of Amnesty, and Josee Lambert, from Amnesty Canada, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that they had informed the Israeli authorities in advance of their desire to visit the camp to check human rights conditions there, and particularly the case of five female detainees who are reportedly suffering from severe health problems.

"The Israeli authorities did not allow us in to check conditions at Khiam or at Marjayoun hospital where doctors are butchers," Thibodeau told reporters in the southern town of Nabatiyeh after they were turned *back at the Kfar Tibnit border cross*ing by Israel-allied militiamen of the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

"This is considered an embarrassment for Israel since it shows it has something to hide from the world. *We are going to pressure the Ca*nadian government to pressure Israel to finish the horror story in Khiam," Thibodeau said. He added that the fact that the Amnesty delegation was denied entry will not affect their determination to continue efforts until they are able to inspect the Khiam camp.

In 1985, Israel, under international pressure, granted the International Committee of the Red Cross the right to visit *Khiam periodically. But the agreement only per*mits the humanitarian organisation to relay its observations to the Israeli government and its delegates may not discuss the conditions at the Khiam camp in public. The ICRC was also allowed to organise family visits to Khiam. "They did not allow us in because our organisation will publicise what we see," Thibodeau explained.

The activists, however, visited the families of detainees and met with recently released prisoners. They will compile a report for Amnesty which will include recommendations to Israel for the improvement of prison conditions. Another report *will be submitted to the Lebanese* government detailing how it can help care for its citizens after their release. During a press conference in Beirut, the Amnesty representatives also played the tape of an interview in which an Israeli Consul in Montreal, Daniel Gal, admitted *detainees held by Israel have been subject to* "violations".

Former detainees say they endured psychological and physical torture at the hands of Israeli soldiers and their allied militiamen. Electric shock, beating and deprivation of sleep and water are systematic.

Released four years ago, 37-year-old Jamal Mahroum vividly recalled how he was psychologically tortured. "They put me for one day in a cage full of dogs. They were barking and my eyes were blindfolded and so I fainted because I thought the dogs were going to bite me," Jamal told the *Weekly*. "I was handcuffed to a chair. They beat me to make me talk. They sent me back to my cell and started to throw cold and hot water on me."

"I was tortured for three years in captivity and *as a result my vision is weak. It is true I am now* free, but in reality I am not. Anything I do reminds me of the suffering I endured," 28-year-old Kameel Daher, another recently released detainee, told the *Weekly*.

Thibodeau, in the same press conference, said women who had spent time in Khiam were raped but social constraints prevented them from discussing their experiences in public. "Rape is common and sometimes they use metal objects. We have documents but the women refuse to reveal their identities to the public."

Kefaf Afifi, a 29-year-old former Khiam detainee, told the *Weekly* about the trauma she experienced. "A man tried to rape me several times. I told him: 'You raped my land and people, so it won't make a difference if you rape me.' They threw gasoline around me and threatened to light a match if I don't say the truth. My *breasts, hands and legs were subjected to electri*cal shocks," she recalled.

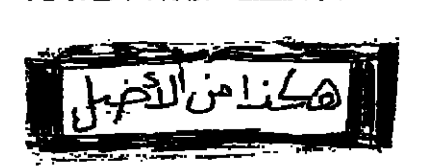
Suha Bishara, one of the women still held in Khiam camp, is regarded as a symbol of Lebanese resistance. In November 1988, she attempted to kill the head of the Israeli-allied mi*litia, Antoine Lahd, wounding him instead. She* spent seven years in solitary confinement. The first time her family was able to see her was in 1995 when the ICRC was given permission to check on the detainees' health.

Amnesty believes those captured and held in *Israeli prisons or in Khiam without charge or* trial or beyond the term of their sentences are held as hostages, to be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations with armed groups in Lebanon. "Israel and its client militia have more than once stated that the release of the detainees held in Is*rael and in Khiam is conditional on the release* of or accounting for Israeli soldiers and militia members missing in action in Lebanon," Amnesty wrote in a report released in July 1997 entitled "Israel's Forgotten Hostages: Lebanese Detainees in Israel and Khiam Detention Centre."

Also held in the camp are Sheikh Abdel-Kareem Obeid and Hajj Mustapha Dirani. Dirani, leader of the Faithful Resistance group, was abducted in a 1994 Israeli commando raid on his hometown in the western Bekaa and Obeid, a Shi'ite Muslim leader, was abducted with two of his guards from Jibshit village in south Lebanon in 1989. According to Thibodeau, Israel told an Amnesty International delegation in 1996 that Sheikh Obeid and Dirani were being held in return for information about Israeli co-pilot Ron Arad, whose aircraft was shot down during an *Israeli raid against Lebanon in 1982.*

Meanwhile, Lebanese nationals continue to be arrested by Israeli occupying forces in the south on suspicion of collaborating with the resistance movement. "We are working very hard to gain the release of the prisoners. We have brought the case to the international community," Lebanese Minister Bishara Merhej, who is also a human rights activist, told the *Weekly*. "But Israel continues to refuse to bow to international pressure."

The Lebanese government and special committees have worked hard to make the international community aware of the plight of the detainees. But efforts to have them released have proved futile in light of Israeli intransigence. In the interim, all detainees exist in a limbo.



Arabs dawdle over MENA

Even though the issue of participation in the upcoming MENA conference was high on the agenda of the Arab League's meeting this week, the Arab foreign ministers failed to reach a common stand. **Sherine Bahaa** writes



Arab League foreign ministers, at the conclusion of their two-day meeting on Sunday, slammed Israel and warned that the hardline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu were endangering the region and could destroy chances for peace in the Middle East. "Peace is a strategic goal but it should be based on the implementation of international resolutions and a complete [Israeli] withdrawal from Arab territory occupied since 1967," said Esmat Abdel-Meguid, secretary-general of the Arab League.

Abdel-Meguid stressed the importance of reaching a united Arab stand in dealing with the deteriorating conditions in the peace process. "A decisive Arab position and the adoption of appropriate measures to face the challenges are needed," he said.

However, the foreign ministers who took part in the regular 108th session of the Arab League's Council, failed to agree on a unified stance concerning participation in the upcoming Fourth Middle East-North Africa Economic Conference (MENA IV), scheduled to be held in Doha on November 16-18.

The conference is an annual event that was inaugurated in 1994 amid the euphoria that followed the signing of peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. It is a by-product of the 1991 Arab-Israeli peace conference of Madrid and aims at strengthening peace between the Arabs and Israel by launching regional economic projects.

Because of Netanyahu's hardline stance and his rejection of the principle of land-for-peace, the Arab leaders who met in a summit conference in Cairo in June last year called for freezing the normalisation of ties with Israel. Since then, Syria has been lobbying Arab countries to boycott the Doha meeting and has been supported by several Arab countries.

According to Mabgoub Omar, an Egyptian expert on Palestinian affairs, there is no comparison between the final statement of this year's League Council meeting and the resolutions adopted by the Cairo summit last year. "The Cairo summit had a momentum of its own. It was meant mainly to put pressure on Netanyahu. Besides, there was no direct resolution in the Cairo summit calling for a complete boycott of Israel. This is against the Egyptian strategy. We must not forget that we signed the Camp David Accords," declared Omar.

The Arabs, he explained, have already relinquished two of the three levels of boycott set up by the Arab League shortly after the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. The first level boycott forbids Arab countries from establishing diplomatic ties with Israel, the second level prohibits any business dealing with Israeli companies and the third encompasses international companies that have investments in Israel.

"The problem is not with Qatar. The core of the problem lies with major countries like Egypt. Egypt has not announced up until now whether it will attend or not," Omar said. "If Egypt chooses the option of participation, we can still go and express our anger," he added. Egyptian diplomatic sources said that if no progress is achieved in the peace process, Cairo *might consider sending a low level delegation to* Doha's MENA conference.

In their final statement, the Arab foreign ministers reiterated the stand adopted since the Cairo summit, namely linking normalisation with Israel to progress in the peace process. But the final decision on participation in MENA was left for each country to determine. "We discussed Arab participation and the decision will be made on an individual basis and in light of the deteriorating situation in the peace process," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa, however, denied that the Arab ministers agreed to leave the decision to participate in the MENA conference to each Arab government. He added that he expected "three or four" Arab countries only to take part in the Doha meeting.

For his part, Gamil Matar, a former assistant secretary-general to the Arab League, had a more specific analysis of the final statement. "To start with," said Matar, "the Council preferred to refer to their communiqué as guidelines. This was meant to ensure flexibility among all parties. The statement is freeing Arab governments from the Cairo summit resolution. It looks as if they have agreed to disagree."

Matar added that the statement also reflected Arab efforts to satisfy US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright after her tour of the region *earlier this month. "If one looks at the meetings* of the League's Council over the past ten years, we will find that they were usually preceded by a regional tour of senior American officials in order to affect the Arab stance," pointed out Matar.

In his speech at the opening meeting of the Council, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat implicitly asked the Arab countries to boycott Doha's MENA. "The best support you can give your brothers in Palestine during this dangerous and crucial situation is to re-affirm the decision of the June 1996 Arab summit which focused on linking normalisation, political and economic relations with Israel with the scope of progress made for a peaceful settlement on all Arab fronts," said Arafat.

In a meeting for Arab ministers one day before the opening of the Arab League session, reports stated that Arafat got involved in a heated debate with Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad Bin Jassem Al-Thani over MENA. Reports added that Arafat almost blacked out after the debate and that he had to be led out of the Foreign Ministry after the meeting. Palestinian officials denied that Arafat's health was deteriorating and said that the 68-year-old leader simply felt tired.

The Qatari foreign minister argued that his country had an international commitment to host the summit. However, this did not convince Syr*ia which was adamant that a resolution be in*cluded in the final statement to prohibit Arab countries from attending the conference. Syrian Foreign Minister Al-Sharaa reiterated that Israel has a list of international commitments which it did not implement.

Al-Sharaa also pointed out that one should differentiate between an individual decision and a decision which will be a drawback to a collective Arab stance. In an apparent compromise, the Qatari foreign minister released an official statement on Saturday, accusing Netanyahu of trying to destroy the peace process since his election as prime minister. The Qatari statement added that the MENA conference would not be successful without progress in the peace process.

Syria, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Algeria have already announced that they will boycott the Doha summit.

Damascus remains unconvinced

Turkish attempts to calm Arab concerns over its growing military ties with Israel will remain fruitless unless Turkey and Syria reach a compromise on several disputed issues, writes **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

In the 18 months that followed the signing of the Turkish-Israeli military agreement, relations between Turkey and several Arab countries plunged from wary trustfulness to deep suspicion that Ankara is undermining the region's security.

Turkey is trying to reassure the Arab world that its ties with Israel are not directed against any country and that the joint naval exercises to be held with US participation in mid-November will be limited to "search and rescue exercises". But both Egypt and Syria, like much of the Arab world, are angered by the fact that Turkey is developing ties with Israel at all.

Seeking to deflect criticism of its growing military cooperation with Israel, Turkey is engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activities in the Arab world. The one-day visit undertaken by President Suleyman Demirel to Cairo last week came within this context and will be followed by a tour to the Gulf area.

Last week, Turkish Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Onur Oymen traveled to Amman and Baghdad. He met with Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan bin Tallal and with officials in Baghdad where he asked his Iraqi counterparts that Turkish companies be more involved in Iraq within the framework of the oil-for-food deal signed with the United Nations.

However, the Arab League, following a two-day foreign ministers' meeting which concluded on Sunday, used what observers described as "moderate" language in criticising Turkey's growing ties with Israel. The League emphasised the Arab countries' concern to maintain close ties with Turkey and called upon Ankara to solve its water disputes with Syria and Iraq through negotiations.

A top Turkish diplomat said the Arab League resolution on Turkey "sported a moderate and not confrontational language." This was seen to be in response to President Mubarak's remarks in the press conference held during Demirel's visit. Mubarak stated that he had been informed that the US-Turkey-Israel military exercise was aimed at humanitarian aid and rescue and was therefore not a matter for concern. Mubarak added that he would brief the Arab League on his discussions with President Demirel.

Farouq Al-Sharaa, Syria's foreign minister, however, said that President Demirel's explanation about the military exercise did not satisfy Damascus. Unlike the Arab League and despite Egyptian assurances about the nature of the forthcoming joint war games between Turkey and Israel, Syria has repeatedly stressed that it still harbors suspicions towards Turkey.

During a press conference held in Alexandria after talks with President Mubarak last week, Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad expressed his dissatisfaction with the Turkish justifications for the manoeuvres. He also denied Turkey's accusation that Syria provides logistic support to the PKK, the separatist Kurdish group, to launch attacks into Turkish territory. "Terrorism is purely a Turkish domestic issue and there is very little we can do about it," Assad said.

Assad blamed "outside elements" for the deterioration of relations between Damascus and Ankara, in a clear reference to Israel. However, he clearly stated that "Syria will not act as Turkey's cop in the area."

President Mubarak, stressing that there should be no conflict between Syria and Turkey, offered to mediate between them. Previous efforts of mediation between the two countries have proved fruitless. Turkey has always refused that a third party facilitate talks with Syria and claims that PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan resides in Syria. Meanwhile, Syria is extremely unhappy about the construction of the Ataturk Dam, Turkey's biggest dam, on the Euphrates River, because it might affect Syria's share of water.

A top Turkish diplomat who accompanied Demirel on his last visit to Cairo spoke of a "problem of mistrust between Turkey and the Arab world." "Egypt and consequently Arab concern over the nature of the relations between Turkey and Israel mirrors the mistrust that the Arab world places on the Turks. The Arabs should believe us when we say that these manoeuvres are not targeting our Arab neighbours and do not pose a threat to Arab interests," the source told the *Weekly*.

He added that both Egypt and Syria, the two Arab countries most vocal in their criticism of the forthcoming naval exercises, were "invited to either participate in the manoeuvres or observe them from aboard a Turkish ship if that move could prove Turkey's good intentions." But President Mubarak flatly rejected Egyptian participation in military manoeuvres to which Israel was a party.

Cypriot cold war heats up

Ankara is threatening to resort to force in order to prevent the transfer of Russian missiles to Greek Cyprus

Tensions between Ankara and Greek Cyprus reached new heights this week when the Greek Cypriot government announced plans to buy S-300 missiles from Russia. **Omayma Abdel Latif** Reports

Recent news reports disclosed that Turkey, for its part, decided "to take countermeasures to prevent the Greek Cypriots from arming the divided island and to implement additional military precautions if all diplomatic attempts prove fruitless."

The Greek Cypriot government plans to buy at least 150 S-300 missiles worth $250 million in a deal signed with Russia earlier this year. Under the agreement, the missiles would be delivered to the island as of the beginning of 1998. Greece is also considering buying the same kind of missiles.

The deal was described by a top Turkish diplomat as "causing grave concern to Turkey because it amounts to an undeclared cold war between Greece and Turkey which puts the area on the threshold of an era of conventional missile buildup."

Striking a conciliatory note, Greek Cypriot leader Glafkos Clerides stated earlier this week that "if an agreement could be reached with the Turkish Cypriots to demilitarise the island, then there would be no need to deploy the S-300s."

The crisis broke out shortly after UN-sponsored negotiations between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Greek Cyprus, to deal with security and disarmament issues on the island, reached a dead-end. Turkey invaded northern Cyprus in 1974 to protect the Turkish minority there. The TRNC is only recognised by the Turkish government.

The current situation, according to one Turkish journalist, is caused by Greece's policies rather than Turkey's. "Greece should stop the deployment of the S-300 rockets in Greek Cyprus. Greece has to see that these missiles will threaten the area's peace," the journalist said.

According to observers, a negotiated end to the current crisis is a necessity since the military option is a possibility. The English-language daily *Turkish Daily News* reported on Sunday that military commanders, in a meeting held earlier this week with Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, disclosed that "the last step of the countermeasures would be an operation to destroy the missiles." But sources close to Turkish military officials said that other options could be considered to deter Greek Cyprus from going ahead with its militarisation campaign. These would include setting up an air base and military harbour in Turkish Cyprus or Turkey itself buying new missiles.

Military sources added that Turkey will tighten current sea and air monitoring operations in order to prevent the Russian missiles from reaching Greek Cyprus.

Turkey heavily criticised Russia for the deal and accused it of threatening its regional security by selling missiles to Greek Cyprus. Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz was quoted as saying that "Russia should be more sensitive and consider its strategic interests because Turkey will not allow the missile transfer to be used to bargain for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from the island."



President Mubarak with Turkish President Demirel during his visit to Cairo last week

Saharan hope in Houston

Morocco and Polisario have agreed on a code of conduct for the planned referendum aimed at determining the fate of the disputed territory. **Gamal Nkrumah** and **Rasha Saad** report

Representatives of the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front that seeks independence for the disputed territory of Western Sahara, agreed last week to a code of conduct covering a planned referendum to decide the fate of the former Northwest African Spanish colony.

The referendum is the cornerstone of a six-year effort aimed at reaching an agreement between Morocco and Polisario on a final settlement plan for the desolate, but mineral-rich, Western Sahara. Following three days of talks at the Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston, Texas, top Moroccan and Polisario officials appear to be on the verge of ending the 23-year war between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

Following the three-day meeting, former United States Secretary of State James Baker said the referendum could be held within the next 10 or 11 months. Baker was appointed as the UN personal envoy for Western Sahara in March this year.

When Spain withdrew from the Western Sahara in 1974, it left the disputed territory — which borders Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania — with no clearly demarcated borders. Shortly after the Spaniards departed, Morocco and Mauritania agreed to divide the territory amongst themselves, leaving Algeria out of the equation. Morocco took the lion's share and most of the phosphate deposits. In the late seventies, Mauritania gave up its claim due to domestic pressures, leaving the entire territory in Morocco's hands.

Observers from neighbouring Algeria and Mauritania were present in Houston, but did not take part directly in the closed-door deliberations. Baker briefed Algeria's Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf and Mauritania's Minister for Presidential Affairs Ahmed Minneh about the various issues discussed during the meetings.

Hitherto, the biggest stumbling block to an agreement was the warring parties' inability to decide on a method to define voter eligibility and on the role of the UN during the transitional phase.

The referendum, as called for in a UN plan, was repeatedly postponed and then suspended in May 1996 because of serious disagreements between the two warring parties over who should be eligible to vote. Polisario wants the referendum restricted to the 75,000 people registered as living in Western Sahara in the closing years of Spanish rule. Morocco wants to include the 120,000 people originally from Morocco who were resettled in the Western Sahara after the departure of the Spanish. As a compromise, Baker convinced Morocco to accept recognising and having contacts with the Polisario in return for including the 120,000 newcomers on the voters' list.

Last Thursday, Polisario leader Mohamed Abdel-Aziz said the accords reached with Morocco laid the ground for resolving the Western Sahara conflict and ending a colonial situation of injustice and suffering of 23 years. In a statement carried on the official APS news agency of Algeria, Abdel-Aziz pledged his side would engage without delay in putting the referendum plan into effect. He called on the Moroccan government to cooperate in honouring the accords.

Between 30,000 and 40,000 people perished during the Sahrawi war. "We hope that the UN and the international community will ensure that Morocco does not renege on its promises so that we end the war," Kamal Fadel of the London Polisario representative office told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is recognised by the Organisation of African Unity, but not by the Arab League. The UN is seeking to organise a referendum, originally set for January 1992, to decide whether Western Sahara should be incorporated into Morocco or become independent as demanded by the Algerian-backed Polisario Front.

Algeria, long regarded as the main Polisario backer, is now embroiled in a ruinous civil war. Algeria is attempting to improve its relations with Morocco. Observers say that Algeria fears that a weapons trade could flourish between rebel Sahrawis and Algerian Islamist militants, which Fadel denies.

Fadel also refuted reports of internal disputes among members of Polisario and denied that leading figures from Polisario are working for Morocco. He also denied that a large number of Sahrawis are escaping from Polisario camps to Mauritania and Morocco.

Baker mediated in talks that took place in Lisbon in June and August 1997 and in London. At their last meeting, Morocco and the Polisario Front reached agreement on the thorny issue of the prisoners of war and Sahrawi political detainees in Morocco.

In Houston, "We started with a draft code of conduct [for the referendum] that had been tabled way back in 1995. The parties had been unable to agree upon the terms of that code of conduct, but we have now agreed upon that. And we have agreed upon pretty much everything that is necessary for us to re-institute the [identification of voters] process," Baker said.

But Baker warned of problems ahead. "I have a few things to discuss with [UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan], but I do not believe we have kicked problems down the road. We have tried to deal with all the issues with which we were confronted. Of course, it is a lot easier to agree to do certain hings, sometimes, than to do them," Baker explained. *Baker has mediated four* rounds of talks since June in an attempt to reach agreement before 30 September, when a 230-member UN observer force is scheduled to pull out of the disputed territory. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, acting on Baker's recommendations, will have to decide whether to renew the mandate of the peace-keeping force.

"This is going to be a free and fair referendum. There is going to be equal access to media, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, international observers, and all the rest. I think we have made some really substantial progress. Now, where do we go from here will depend upon the Security Council of the UN," Baker said. "The parties did accept the principle that the UN will have all the authorities that it deems necessary in order to organise and conduct a free and fair referendum."

Edited by **Khaled Dawoud**

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At the first plenum of the 15th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, it was clear that even from beyond the grave Deng Xiaoping is still the master puppeteer. **Gamal Nkrumah** analyses the implications



Deng's successor Chinese President Jiang Zemin (photo: Reuters)

Deng or die

The first plenum of the 15th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) met in Beijing on 9 September. The plenum, attended by 191 full members and 151 alternate members of the Central Committee, produced the best political theatre Beijing has seen for years.

Heads rolled and new faces were catapulted centre-stage. 71-year-old Chinese President Jiang Zemin presided over the plenum and delivered the keynote address. But it was obvious to all observers that his mentor, the late Chinese leader and architect of China's radical economic reforms, Deng Xiaoping, was still pulling the strings, even from beyond the grave.

What was at the top of the agenda? "Accelerated economic growth is the most important issue in China today. Upon it depends China's future prosperity. It is the basis of everything," the Chinese ambassador to Cairo told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Ambassador Yang Fuchang, speaking in impeccable Arabic, explained that the Chinese leadership was determined to ensure that the plenum should not be just a talking shop. Laws that are vitally important to the country's future prosperity will no longer go through on the nod.

For China's Communist leadership which has coaxed the country through two decades of market reforms, the buzz surrounding the Congress was promising. The trappings of power have changed. Younger, suaver, savvy technocrats are now in charge. They invariably exude the "lets-get-down-to-work" aura that characterised Deng himself.

Jiang, Deng Xiaoping's chosen successor as CPC secretary-general, emerged from the congress with even more power than before. Delegates backed his economic reforms and retired his rival Qiao Shi, the 72-year-old chairman of the National People's Congress, who stepped down from the Politburo ostensibly because of old age. Qiao, a severe critic of Jiang, had proved to be no match for him.

Elsewhere, many other changes in the cast list were either already in place or imminent. Li Peng, the man who drew the wrath of human rights activists for his role in the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, will have to resign from the premiership in March and is said to be interested in replacing Qiao Shi as head of the national legislature.

Many top military figures have also recently resigned, including General Liu Huaquing and Yang Baihang.

Meanwhile, there is a generation of Young Turks ready to take their place, who for once *are* (relatively) young. The rising star of the CPC, Zhu Rongji, for instance, is only 68. Presently vice-president in charge of economic policy, he is widely touted, according to Ambassador Yang, to succeed Li as premier.

Other up-and-coming figures being tipped to step into jobs at the very top of the party apparatus include: Li Ruihuan (62), former model worker and mayor of Tianjin; Hu Jintao (54), the youngest member of the powerful Politburo Standing Committee, who was responsible for brutally suppressing anti-Chinese riots in Tibet in 1988 and 1989; Wei Jianxing (66), secretary of the much-feared Standing Committee of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, who is credited with cleaning up Beijing after a government corruption scandal hit the city in 1995; General Zhang Wannian (69), a career soldier dedicated to military modernisation; and Li Lanqing (65), currently vice-premier, a technocrat who worked under Jiang in the 1950s at the Number One Auto Plant.

So it seems that even in China the times they are a'changing — albeit within a limited range of officially-authorised possibilities. "Mao Zedong used such plenums to rubber-stamp decisions taken by himself in private," a New York-based Chinese journalist told the *Weekly*. "Deng Xiaoping changed all that and ushered in an era of benign authoritarianism," she added. "In the new China, all roads lead to Deng." But at least (an optimist might say) there's more than one way of getting there.

Needless to say, benign authoritarianism is not without its critics. But so long as China's economic prosperity continues to outshine the rest of the Third World, the criticisms, both domestic and foreign, are unlikely to be put with very much force. Until a more workable system is found, Deng's dual system of economic liberalisation and political conservatism will continue to have much appeal both in Asia and the developing countries as a whole.

"Socialism must eliminate poverty. Poverty is not socialism," was among Deng's most popular statements. "Deng's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' works," Ambassador Yang assured us. He emphasised that with Zemin at the helm, foreign investments in the People's Republic should pay handsome returns, and he promised an even more open China in the years ahead.

At the annual World Bank and International Monetary Fund meeting in Hong Kong on Sunday, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng told World Bank President James Wolfensohn that China plans to pursue "other forms of ownership, but continue to take public ownership as its mainstay". Since Deng instituted radical economic reforms, the state's role in the Chinese economy has been reduced, with the non-state sector now accounting for almost two-thirds of China's GDP. But the World Bank estimates that over one half of China's 305,000 state enterprises lost money last year.

China is a country in transition. It has been doubling its income every ten years. China is rapidly developing into a highly urbanised society from a predominantly rural one only a decade ago. The Chinese economy, formerly one of the world's largest command economies, is now increasingly market-based.

The Chinese authorities are aware that in spite of spectacular economic growth rates, many people in their country face rising social, economic and environmental problems. There is also widespread suspicion of the World Bank's encouragement of the transfer of vast powers to multinational corporations in particular and to private enterprise generally.

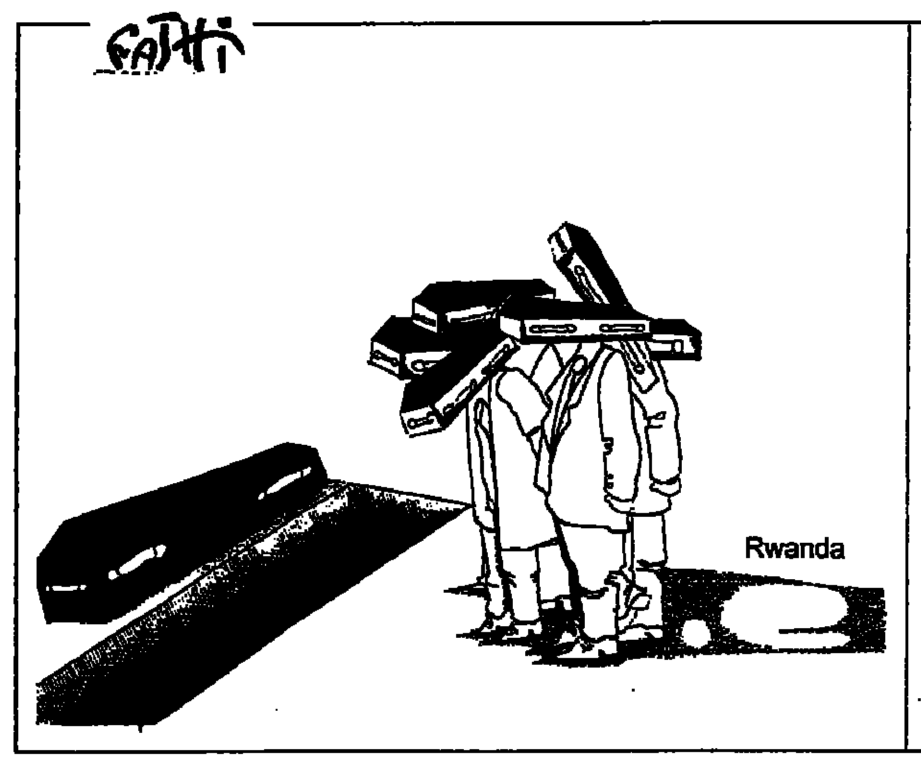
According to the IMF's latest *World Economic Outlook* report, "significant challenges remain in completing the transition to a fully market-based economy and achieving income levels comparable with those in the newly industrialised economies of Asia. The key requirement is a decisive breakthrough in state enterprise reform which will be an important determinant of whether China can continue to enjoy the rapid rates of productivity growth experienced during the first two decades of reform."

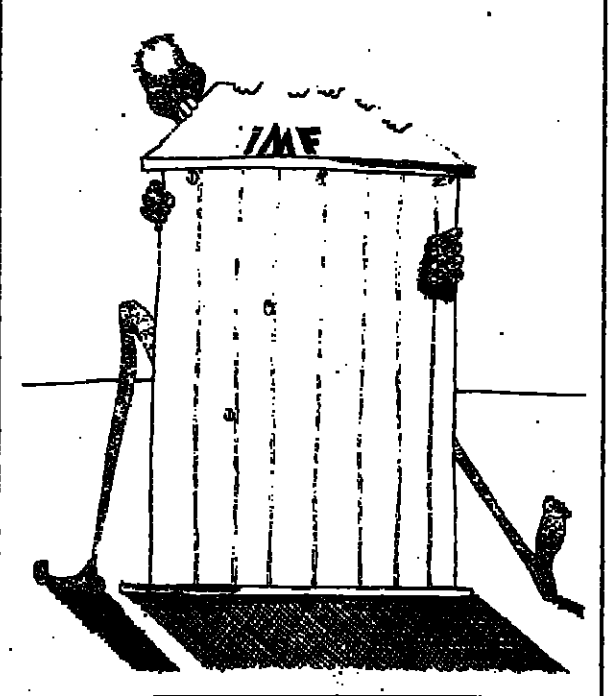
The IMF report warned of lingering constraints to accelerated development such as widening income disparities, the lack of significant progress in restructuring state enterprises, a tax system which relies too heavily on the state sector and an uneven pattern of development between the coastal and interior regions. But there is no denying China's dazzling economic performance.

In the past two decades, Communist China's share in world export markets has nearly tripled, and its foreign reserves are estimated at over $120 billion — the world's second largest. China's economy grew at an annual rate of 9.5 per cent in the first half of 1997. Inflation stood at 4.1 per cent. China's high savings rate of 37 per cent of gross domestic product is impressive. The Soviets, who could gauge their influence over China by the amount of economic aid they gave to or withheld from their eastern neighbour, would have envied the Chinese Communists' record. In Chinese eyes, the Soviets' mistake was to liberalise the political system, introducing that byword for political disaster, *perestroika*, without deregulating the economy. Foreign direct investment in China has risen from near zero in the early 1980s to over $40 billion today.

Three months after Hong Kong was returned to China the city hosted the world's largest gathering of financiers. Demonstrators sang the "Internationale" and shouted, "IMF and World Bank go to hell. Down with the World Bank. Down with the IMF". Members of Solidarity Against the World Bank and the IMF, a vociferous grouping of human rights, labour and welfare organisations, voiced concern that despite China's astronomical growth rates, inequalities between rich and poor, urban and rural, men and women abound.

The bankers, for their part, were more concerned with the collapse of state enterprise profitability in the People's Republic and the Chinese government's fiscal difficulties. But they are generally happy to work with those running the new China. Among the bankers' favourites is Zou Jiahua, vice-premier of China's State Council, who heads the State Council Information Technology Development Leading Group, established in 1996 to deal with rival ministries battling for control over China's high tech industries.





Democracy without democrats



The failure of Pakistani leaders fully to comprehend the requirements of democratic governance augurs ill for the country's future, warns **Eqbal Ahmad**

The title of this article is obviously an oxymoron. As life without oxygen, democracy cannot exist without democrats to sustain it. The absence of such sustenance has been the cause of the repeated death of democracy in Pakistan. Both of Pakistan's coups d'état, in 1958 and 1977, occurred after Pakistan's certified democrats, the elected parliamentary leaders, had consistently violated the norms of democracy, and thus failed to establish the legitimacy of democratic governance. A third catastrophe of our history, when in 1972 the majority of Pakistan's citizens were alienated from the state and East Pakistan separated to become Bangladesh, also occurred because Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, West Pakistan's parliamentary leader, joined hard-line soldiers and bureaucrats in violating a fundamental precept of democracy — the principle of majority rule.

After so many losses and so much suffering, you would expect that our new crop of parliamentary leaders would have learned from the failures of the past. But no. One is struck more by the continuities in Pakistani political life than by the changes. Nawaz Sharif's election this year appeared in many ways to be a harbinger of change for the better in Pakistani political life. He is the first politician with urban roots to lead this country since Mohamed Ali Jinnah. As a true heir to the Qaid, he has revived one part of his legacy by breathing new life into the founder's party, the Muslim League, which had for three decades served as hand-maiden to counter-democratic forces — soldiers, bureaucrats and landlords.

As prime minister, Sharif has projected a sense of purpose entirely lacking in both his military mentor and his civilian opponent. A mere seven months into its current tenure, his government can claim enough accomplishments to match the three and half years of Benazir Bhutto's administration. To cite only the most obvious examples: the prohibition on wedding dinners is a blessing to the poor, who are driven into debt by the pressures of *biraderi* and custom. The affluent may carp if the law is enforced against them too, but so much the better: that way, no one can be singled out for blame for respecting it. The VIP lounges have been closed, traffic is rarely blocked for official motorcades, and duty-free cars are no longer among the perks of the president, prime minister, and governors. A national census, unduly postponed by almost a decade, has finally been scheduled. Moreover, the government is doing nearly as well as it can under the circumstances to improve the terrible economic situation it had inherited.

In a country where a minor improvement takes decades to effect, these are not small gains. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is in a position to build on these achievements with pride and confidence, since he enjoys both widespread public support and an unprecedented majority in Parliament. Yet despite this, he appears to be on the verge of squandering his assets, and entering into headlong collision with the press, the judiciary, the bar and, most critically, with the future itself. From the single meeting I had with him, in December 1992, I have the impression of a leader who is not lacking in modesty, and who is therefore not averse to listening. So I pray that those of his advisers and colleagues who share our concerns — including, amongst others, Ardeshir Cowasjee, I A Rahman, Aziz Siddqui, Ghani Eirabie, and M B Naqvi — will speak out forcefully and sincerely to persuade the prime minister to pull back from the brink, and that he will listen to them and reconsider.

All but the most irrational and mischievous of citizens share the prime minister's concern with the steep rise in sectarian, ethnic, and criminal violence in Pakistan. It disturbs social order, distorts national identity, slows economic growth, and undermines the state and government. The profile, scope and intensity of the violence and terror we are experiencing resembles those phenomenal breakdowns of law and order which have occurred, the world over, at historic junctures and in times of transition. In the subcontinent, such were the times of Mohamed Shah Rangila and his successors, who had no sense of history or of the momentous challenges they faced. Such were also the years of the Thugee, when the British took the opportunity to complete and refine the framework of the colonial state, its investigative, policing, and legal mechanisms. Hence it is essential that policy-makers, no less that concerned citizens, examine new laws and institutional arrangements in a broad perspective that links problem-solving with the active construction of the future.

Viewing matters from such a vantage point, I am unable to find any virtue in the recent Anti-Terrorist Ordinance. Nearly everything that can sensibly be said about this law has already been said by other critics, all of whom are, despite their different political outlooks, patriotic men and women with a history of service to and deep roots in Pakistani society. Their pleading deserves reiteration, nevertheless, because it has not yet received a serious hearing.

A law, under which an accused person's 'confession' to a police officer is admissible as evidence in court, is not a law. It is an open invitation to torture, which is prohibited by the Constitution. "No one shall be compelled to bear witness against himself" is a universal norm of civilized law, enshrined too in Pakistan's constitution. This new law does not merely encourage torture.

Rather, it compels torture, by reducing the period of police investigation from 14 to 7 days; and by threatening police officers with up to two years' imprisonment if they are deemed not to have done enough to secure a conviction. The law also waives the requirement for warrants for arrest and search, thus tearing up another Constitutional provision — Article 14(1) — and rendering even the suspect's family and presumed friends open targets for police harassment. Someone — the president who signed the ordinance, colleagues like Saraj Aziz, aides like Mushahid Hussain, and preferably all of them — have to persuade the prime minister that this is not a law parliamentarians can accept. It is an uncivilised law, which would be unsafe even in the hands of a police force made up of saints. It must never reach the parliament. It deserves a quiet burial.

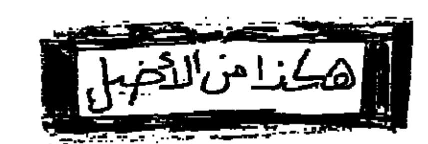
Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto are primary beneficiaries of Pakistan's battered constitution and the parliamentary democracy which rests on it. They should seek to nurture it, rather than flog it for all it's worth. Three fundamental requirements of democratic government are strict constitutionalism, the rule of law, and the separation of countervailing powers. Democracy has been destabilised and subordinated to praetorian ambitions, mainly because it has been served by unprincipled "democrats" who cared neither for constitutionalism, nor the rule of law, nor for the separation of powers. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto presented the most tragic example of a non-democrat presiding over a democracy. That he gave Pakistan its present constitution, was his crowning achievement. Then he proceeded to violate it, creating a vicious cycle of resistance, rebellion, and repression. He also violated its spirit by passing amendments which conferred upon the prime minister powers which few prime ministers in the world enjoy, and which made a mockery of the principle of the separation of powers. As often happens, far from benefiting by it, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was devoured by his own creation. Ironically, neither Benazir Bhutto nor Nawaz Sharif have tried to rid the country of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's constitutional and legal legacies. Ziaul Haq's amendment has been repealed. But Bhutto's amendments remain, which is to say that the imperial prime ministership remains, its powers augmented by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's solid majority in the parliament. At the very least, he ought to exercise his extraordinary powers judiciously, and not seek to augment them, especially in relation to the judiciary.

The institutions of administration and law enforcement in Pakistan are unable to cope with terror and crime because they are excessively politicised, corrupt and incompetent, and not because they lack forceful laws. Many of our laws were enacted by the colonial rulers. They did not rule India wearing kid gloves, a bill of rights in one hand. Their laws were tough, and often enthusiastically enforced. Yet provisions existed for the protection of basic rights. The Punjab Act of 1867 (amended in 1943 and 1945) was directed at the Thugee movement and the anti-colonial resistance which persisted in northern and western India. It is a harsh law, still operational, yet which provides some form of safeguard against a total miscarriage of justice. Similarly, the Penal Code and Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 is still in force.

These, like all laws everywhere, with the passage of time need to be updated and refined. They ought to be amended, not added to. Duplication of laws is bad practice, as it causes confusion, and can lead to discriminatory enforcement of laws and corruption in the administration of law and order. Yet, such needless and dangerous accumulation is precisely what successive governments have done, without thereby reinforcing law and order one iota. Bhutto added the Suppression of Terrorism Act in 1975. Introduced as an Ordinance in 1974, it was first applied to Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province. Soon it was given national scope, with Special Courts set up in every province. The most notable feature of this law is that the accused is presumed guilty until proven innocent. It has done nothing to restore law and order in Baluchistan, but has contributed significantly to the tragedy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Another law, the Terrorist Areas Affected Act, was introduced in 1992, and yet another is now before us in 1997.

It is in their outlook on the use of power, their attitude towards law and the judiciary, their formalistic equation of crime with punishment, in brief, their failure to internalise the values and norms of democracy, that the differences between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif begin to fade. They have now twice taken turns as prime minister, but neither has shown significantly greater comprehension of what democratic governance is about than did our earlier rulers, from Ayub Khan to Ziaul Haq. Both have built on prior legacies and allowed authoritarian instincts to overwhelm their social and political imagination. Both confuse power with political process and presume order to be the product of punishment. Hence both have tended to adopt the policeman's approach to solving problems, rather than that of the democratic ruler.

I can only conclude with sadness that the failure of these younger leaders to comprehend the requirements of democratic governance augurs ill for the country's future. Dare one still hope that Prime Minister Sharif might extend into this most critical aspect of government and politics his considerable capacity to learn and grow as a leader?



The winds of devolution

The Devolution Revolution's most dramatic illustration to date has been the overwhelming "yes" vote of Scotland, writes Jooneed Khan

The "Devolution Revolution" has been taking Britain — and indeed the whole of Europe — by storm. On 11 September, Scotland voted by referendum to have its own Parliament with limited tax-varying powers. On 18 September, Wales followed with a razor-thin "yes" to a Welsh Assembly, albeit without tax-raising powers.

Delighted at the outcome, which capped his first 120 days in power, the British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that "this is about taking power presently exercised in a very bureaucratic way from Whitehall and Westminster through the secretaries of state for Wales and Scotland and giving it to a body that is directly elected by the people".

The great leap, coming on the heels of the national hysteria over the death of Princess Diana, only appears sudden; devolution has in fact been debated in the United Kingdom for decades, and similar referendums were lost to the "no" sides 20 years ago in both Scotland and Wales, by a 4 to 1 margin in the latter case. In fact devolution is a constant feature on the political agendas of many Northern countries. Following the first free elections after Franco, the 1978 Spanish Constitution allowed for a form of devolution for Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque region — without however succeeding in putting an end to ETA's armed struggle for an independent Basque homeland.

In Canada, the Quebec sovereignty movement has been active since the 1960s and, in power in the province, it came within a whisker of pulling off majority support at the latest referendum two years ago. The surge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism now coincides with the break-up of the Soviet Union, the capitulation of socialism as an ideological alternative to capitalism, and the emergence of dozens of new small States where Europe and Asia meet, from Slovakia to Georgia, and from Slovenia to Azerbaijan.

In the United States, it is the same story, even if it is not often reported. The Alaskan Independence Party is very much alive and kicking, as is the League of the South in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi and Virginia, as well as the Conch Republic in Florida, the Hawaiian Independence Movement, the Republic of Texas, the North Star Republic (Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula), and the New England Confederation movement.

"The winds of change are howling through the halls of American federalism," wrote Joseph Bast, of the Heartland Institute, in November 1995. "The States are clamouring to take responsibility for billions of dollars of social welfare programmes now controlled by the federal government. At the root of the devolution movement is the Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which reads: The powers not delegated to the US by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people".

This trend has been taken to one histrionic extreme in Italy, where the Northern League of Umberto Bossi is clamouring for an independent State of "Padania" (comprising the lands along the River Po) which would no longer be "bled dry by the hopeless poverty of Southern Italy". This drama which sometimes verges on farce (or at least comic opera) also has its tragic version, in the bloody disintegration of the former Yugoslavia where Serbs and Croats have carried out "ethnic cleansing" on a massive scale, or in the violent separatist wars fought in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Chechnya, for example.

Britain's centralist bonds date back to 1301 when Edward of Caernarvon, son of Edward I of England, was made Prince of Wales, and to 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England. The current attempt to loosen them has as much to do, however, with internal politics, and indeed with European construction, as with socialism's demise.

Devolution for Scotland and Wales was a major plank in the New Labour platform of Tony Blair. Having eschewed his party's Leftist radical heritage in order to embrace the heritage of Margaret Thatcher's all-triumphant market reforms, Blair was elected on his genial (and vague) promises of "renewal" and "modernisation". Since he has been in power, Blair has set off a bat out of hell, shaking what little was left of the foundations of the Welfare State, renewing the dialogue with Europe, and opening the way to talks with the IRA.

Indeed, devolution for Scotland and Wales may just be a prelude to the referendum promised for May 1998 on the thornier issue of decentralisation for Northern Ireland. With his 178-seat majority in the House of Commons, Blair does not depend on the Unionist MPs from Ulster, as John Major did towards the end of his mandate. Here too an Ulster Nation is rearing its head, talking about identity and nationhood for the Protestant majority of Northern Ireland, the province that was carved out of Ireland and joined to the UK in 1921.

Caught between the Irish (Catholic) demand for reunification and the Ulster (Protestant) call for independence as a "third way" between government from Dublin or London, and both sides having shown their willingness to use armed force, Blair may well choose to let the Ulsterites dabble in some form of devolution of their own.

Especially since devolution is not independence, notwithstanding Mrs Thatcher's dire warnings, which she repeated in an article in *The Scotsman* on the eve of the 11 September referendum, where she portrayed decentralisation as a potent threat to the continued existence of the United Kingdom.

In Tony Blair's view, devolution is in fact the antidote to the yearning for independence. Taking his cue from the European Union's preferred solution to the problem of the "democratic deficit" that has been engendered by the Brussels Eurocracy, Blair has turned to embrace the principle of "subsidiarity". This states that central governments must leave to regional and local authorities all those matters that are best handled at these subsidiary levels. For the Labour leader, democratic renewal can thus conveniently provide an escape route for central governments at a time of major budget cuts, as well as a controlled form of empowerment for the disgruntled grass-roots.

This, he thinks, together with a promised reform of the House of Lords, will lay to rest Britain's internal ghosts while the UK wrestles with the challenges of Europeanisation and globalisation.

But the New Labour government may indeed have opened a Pandora's box of claims and counter-claims: many of Scotland's 5.1-million inhabitants, descendents of the Picts against whom the Romans built Hadrian's Wall, want full-fledged independence for their 80,000 sq km homeland and they won't be satisfied with electing a 129-member Parliament empowered only to raise or lower taxes within a 3 per cent margin in relation to the rest of the UK. Less than a week after the 11 September referendum, hard-line Scottish nationalists began asking for a referendum on the monarchy.

It is widely believed that the 2.8-million Welsh who occupy a territory of 21,000 sq km, heirs to the "foreigners" who were repeatedly crushed and driven into the mountains by the early Anglo-Saxon invaders, voted reluctantly for devolution only because their proposed 60-seat assembly would have no taxation powers.

Blair now also has to contend with the English majority, who want the Scottish and Welsh autonomists kicked out of Westminster. A major British newspaper last week carried a prominent ad encouraging the English to call for a drastic reduction of Scottish and Welsh MPs in the House of Commons.

"The English were not consulted about autonomy for Wales and Scotland. The Parliament of Westminster will now have extremely reduced powers over Scotland and Wales whereas Scottish and Welsh MPs will continue to play a big role in English affairs. Do you think this is an acceptable situation?"

Indicate Yes or No, wrote the author of the ad, who asked readers to tick off their response and mail him the "ballot". Tony Blair has already given some ground on the issue. Over the summer, he promised to set up an electoral commission to look into the possible modification of Welsh and especially Scottish representation in Parliament, the Scottish being over-represented in relation to their real demographic share in the UK population.

In a parallel campaign, a handful of parties and groups are carrying on the fight of John Major's erstwhile Eurosceptics against Eurocracy, warning the British via the Internet that the UK is about to be swallowed wholesale by the European monster, currency, defence, justice system and all. One organisation even fears that the fact that the EU has chosen English as its preferred language presents a danger of "esperantism", claiming, for example, that "public acceptance" could eventually be spelled "publik akseptanse".

Tony Blair undoubtedly hopes devolution and grass-roots participation in running local affairs will act as a counterweight to continentalism, and strengthen Britain's hand in dealing with Europe and the Eurocrats. But, strangely enough, reinforcing links with Europe was a major argument of the "yes" campaign for the Welsh referendum:

"Bilingual Wales sees Europe as a counter-force to English domination, and even though the Welsh are not less Eurosceptic than the English, they fully appreciate the impact of European subsidies on social and economic restructuration after the decline of the coal industry", said Stephen Thomas, director of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs in Cardiff.

Seats for dissenting voices

The South must have permanent seats at the UN Security Council. The Council's reform is long overdue but Washington's recent proposals are unlikely to right past wrongs, argues Gamal Nkrumah

In recent years, much steam has gone into attempts to reform the United Nations and change the composition of the Security Council. The question now uppermost in the minds of policy makers from many developing countries of the South is: How can Third World representation be assured at the UN's most influential body — the Security Council?

At the 52nd United Nations General Assembly Brazil reiterated its demand for a permanent seat and South Africa indicated that "a limited expansion of only five or six seats" will not do. The United States proposed granting permanent seats to Germany, Japan and three developing countries.

Bill Richardson, America's permanent representative to the UN, recently embarked on a world tour to discuss plans concerning the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. Richardson assured that Washington was prepared to add new seats for representatives of both the North and South to the Security Council. But Washington's intent is only clear in one respect: it wants permanent seats on the Security Council for Germany and Japan — two highly industrialised countries that do not challenge the US at the UN. Washington is drawing up its ideological battle lines at a time when, with the demise of the former Soviet Union, it cannot be challenged.

Richardson's proposal envisions seats for the Third World — at least one each for Africa, Asia and Latin America. Washington wants the Third World seats to be rotated among African, Asian and Latin American countries if they so wish, but the newcomers will be denied veto power.

"We have made a gesture to the developing world," Richardson said recently. And because Washington wants to separate the critical veto issue from the Security Council composition, it calls for a separate select group of advanced industrialised nations to monopolise veto power. The Republican-dominated Congress might not even permit Japan to have a veto over UN policy — let alone giving the South such a veto.

The countries of the South are divided on alternatives to Richardson's plans. The big question for them is which country should represent them at the Security Council. The South needs permanent representatives who would address their developmental needs and reduce the amount of pressure exercised on them by the US and other Western powers.



US President Bill Clinton applauded UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's UN reforms last Monday

"Today, the developing countries themselves are split on political and economic issues. You do not have a commonality of vision that you used to have in the sixties and seventies," said Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, India's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva. Ghose recalled how an American diplomat recently explained to her that India was on a different cultural wavelength from the West and, therefore, could not have a permanent seat on the Security Council. "We are on a different cultural wavelength. It is precisely this different cultural wavelength that needs to be represented at the Security Council. But, of course, we know exactly what the Americans meant. They are inherently discriminatory," Ghose said, echoing the feeling of many Third World decision makers.

Ambassador Ghose said, " The Western media ignores this crucial issue. We took apartheid to the UN. We voted against the creation of the state of Israel even though we have diplomatic relations with Israel today. Our presence as a permanent member of the Security Council would help to promote decisions through the eyes of developing countries."

"What is most important is that we have the ability to say no and to talk about issues that are not raised by Western countries." Ghose went on.

"The important thing is to bring the General Assembly back into the decision-making process. The Security Council should act on behalf of the General Assembly. We see UN reform as a very long process. We should not rush reform. But, if we don't change the whole thing will implode and collapse upon itself," Ghose warned.

Ramos bends to 'people power'

Time is running out for the Filipino president as ordinary citizens took to the streets last week. Faiza Rady examines the origins of an impending crisis

More than one million Filipinos demonstrated on Sunday to protest against President Fidel Ramos' attempt to extend his term in office through a constitutional amendment. The 1987 constitution limits presidents to a single six-year term to prevent them from perpetuating their power. While 600,000 people took to the streets of the capital Manila, more than 400,000 marched in the provinces in the biggest "people power" rally the country has witnessed since Filipinos overthrew the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

Clad in the symbolic yellow of the "people-power" revolution, the demonstrators pledged that they would never again allow a dictator to rule their country, giving Ramos a clear signal to step down at the end of his term next June.

Ramos' predecessor, former President Corazon Aquino, who helped install him in office, told the demonstrators that she would lead a "people-prayer-power 1977" if Ramos imposed martial law or tried to run again. "We are many, we are free, we are committed and we are strong. We are people power once more. We triumphed over tyranny before; tyranny cannot triumph over us again," said Aquino.

Indeed some political analysts speculated that the army was behind two bombings and several bomb scares in recent weeks as part of a campaign to justify a declaration of martial law. "We want to impress upon the leaders of today and tomorrow that we will come here as often as needed to remind them that they are the servants, not the masters, of the people." Aquino told the cheering crowd.

Capitulating to popular pressure and in an apparent bid to undermine the protest, Ramos had already pledged on Saturday that he would step down at the end of his term. "There is no more beef," Ramos assured journalists at a press conference, lashing out at the organisers for still insisting on going ahead with the march. Political analysts believe that Ramos was particularly threatened by the Catholic Church's strong involvement in the protest action.

Along with non-governmental organisations, peasant activists and community groups, the church joined in the mobilisation drive — with priests campaigning from pulpits and teachers in Catholic schools encouraging students to march.

Historically, the Church has played an active role in Filipino politics, and was instrumental in overthrowing the Marcos dictatorship — Cardinal Sin of Manila was one of the leaders of the 1986 "people power" revolution. The Church opposes many of the Ramos administration's policies, taking a strong stand on many issues including development policies and agrarian reform. As in Latin America, left-wing priests became active in the communist movement during the late 1960s and such involvement continues today.

Some analysts believe that the strength of Sunday's demonstration was provoked above all by lingering fears of the President's affiliation with the Marcos dictatorship. For many Filipinos, Ramos remains politically tainted because of his close collaboration with his friend and cousin, Ferdinand Marcos. For 16 years, Ramos headed the national police force, which enforced martial law — committing countless human rights violations along the way. Ramos also served as vice-chief of the armed forces and was a trusted adviser to Marcos. But when it became clear that the Marcos dictatorship was no longer sustainable, Ramos shifted his ground, and threw the army's weight behind the "people power" movement — headed by Corazon Aquino, who became President in 1986. When Aquino completed her term in office, Ramos ran for the presidency and was elected with the backing of big business and the landowning elite.

"We marched against Ramos' attempt to change the constitution, but also because material conditions for the majority of Filipinos have actually deteriorated since the Marcos era," Antonio Tujan, director of the Ibon Philippines Data Bank and Research Centre, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "The Ramos administration's land reforms, the so-called Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), has in fact become a massive land speculation and agricultural restructuring process — resulting in widescale land and crop conversion and ultimately in the dispossession of tenant farmers," explained Tujan.

In effect, the 1991 Agricultural Census recorded that 2.6 million farms were leased to peasants, a marked increase over the 1.3 million farms rented in 1980. Moreover, landlords get between 40 per cent and 90 per cent of the produce under the share-tenancy relations contract. An emerging group of middle men monopolise the supply of loans, farm implements, seeds and chemical inputs — withholding supplies at will and creating shortages to inflate prices. "The massive landlessness and exploitation of the peasants have resulted in extreme destitution," said Tujan. Poverty in the rural areas, according to the National Economic and Development Authority, is estimated at 72.5 per cent.

"The creation of artificial shortages, conducive to speculation and huge price increases, caused a dramatic food crisis in 1995," according to political analyst Catherine Gaudard. At that time the price of rice jumped from 15 pesos a kilo in April, to 18 pesos in June, reaching 25 pesos in September — an exorbitant price for poor Filipinos. Although the Ramos administration tried to salvage the crisis by importing 200,000 tons of rice in June and regulating retail prices, they did not manage to control speculation. "Most peasant organisations criticised the government's efforts, pointing out that the administration had given speculators free rein to control the market," explained Gaudard.

While the Filipino people reeled under the impact of the food crisis, the government, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund waxed euphoric over the country's soaring annual GDP growth rate of five per cent — which they attributed to successful structural adjustment programmes based on sweeping economic deregulation and privatisation. But prominent political writer Noam Chomsky disagrees. "The Philippines had the largest exposure to structural adjustment reforms in Asia. Following the rules rigorously, it fell into protracted recession, the collapse highlighted by its location in the growth center of the world economy." So, to judge by the events of the past week, do many Filippinos.

The seven sins of globalisation

The latest UNCTAD Trade and Development report highlights the "sins" of globalisation, reports Gamil Ibrahim from Geneva

Globalisation is polarising the world economy, among and within countries and between rich and poor, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warned this week in its Trade and Development Report for the year 1997.

The report focused on mounting evidence that slow growth and rising inequalities are becoming more permanent features of the world economy. UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero drew attention to what the report calls the "seven stylised facts" of the effects of globalisation.

Gaps between developed and developing countries, as well as within the latter, are steadily widening. In 1965, average GNP per capita for the top 20 per cent of the world's population was 30 times that of the poorest 20 per cent while 25 years later, in 1990, the gap had doubled to 60 times.

The rich have gained everywhere and not just in comparison to the poorest sections of society. The "hollowing out" of the middle class has become a prominent feature of income distribution in both developing and developed countries.

Finance has been gaining the upper hand over industry and speculators and traders overshadow investors. In some developing countries, debt interest payments have reached 15 per cent of their gross domestic product and trading in existing assets is thus often much more lucrative than creating wealth through new investment in productive ventures. The share of income accruing to capital has gained over that assigned to labour.

Profit shares have risen in both developed and developing countries. In four out of five developing countries, the share of wages in manufacturing value added products today is well below that in the early 1980s. Job and income insecurity is spreading. As rising interest rates have eaten into business revenues, corporate restructuring, labour shedding and wage repression have become the norm in much of the industrially advanced North as well as parts of the poor South. The growing wage gap between skilled and unskilled labour is becoming a global problem.

Already an established trend in many developed countries, absolute falls in the real wages of unskilled workers — 20 to 30 per cent in some cases — has become commonplace in developing countries since the early 1980s.

UNCTAD warns that the burden of international economic disintegration, if it were to take place, would, as during the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, be borne by those who can least afford it.

Contrary to much current economic thinking and the recommendations and stipulations of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the UNCTAD report states that increased competition does not automatically bring faster growth and development. Nor do growth and development automatically bring about a reduction in inequality. No economic law exists that will make developing economies converge automatically towards the income levels of developed countries if they only open up, deregulate, liberalise and privatise. Instead, UNCTAD urges a carefully phased easing into the world economy for developing countries, based on tailoring the process to the strength of the economy concerned, as well as to the stability, maturity and flexibility of the country's institutions.

Government policies devised to manage integration into the world economy can also be put to good effect in reconciling rapid growth and distributional objectives, the report argues. The prevailing notion that, faced with globalisation forces, policy-makers in developing countries may lose their capacity to pursue development objectives actively is not accepted by UNCTAD. The role of policy-makers in the South is as important as ever. The report stresses that the role of policy-makers is important because "growth and income distribution both depend on how profits are managed." According to the report, "experience shows that policies designed to manage profits so as to accelerate growth can also serve to manage distribution."

It is important, though, that efforts to manage emerging inequalities be included at the outset when designing development strategies, as was successfully done in some, although not all, newly industrialising East Asian Countries.

"The basic policy challenge in the South," according to UNCTAD, "is how to translate rising profits into investment at a pace sufficient to underpin a social contract whereby initial inequalities can be justified, and eventually reduced, by the resulting rise in incomes and living standards of the mass of the population."

Furniture exhibition

A GROUP of nine Egyptian furniture producers are taking part in the Third International Furniture Exhibition in Valencia, Spain.

Participants at the exhibition, which started on the 22 September, are displaying examples of their classical furniture production.

Organised by the Spanish Authority For Exhibitions, the exhibition is designed to give furniture producers the opportunity to meet with their international counterparts to establish new contacts and business deals.

A representative of Odeon Gallery, one of the exhibitors, said, "Our primary concern is to place both feet firmly in the international markets, and not only to increase the volume of our sales."

While there will be no sales transactions during the exhibition, interested buyers can place purchase orders through catalogues printed by each company.

According to the Ministry of Trade's Commercial Representation Office, five Internet pages are being designed in order to promote Egypt's furniture industry, including information on furniture producers and exporters.

German business

OVER 100 Egyptian and German businessmen and officials will be meeting in the German city of Cologne to take part in the Egyptian-German Business Day on 1 October.

Organised by the German Industry Federation and its Egyptian counterpart, the event is designed to give participants the opportunity to dig up investment opportunities and explore new business relations.

A cooperation agreement is also scheduled to be signed for the first time between the federations of industries of both countries.

According to German Ambassador in Cairo Wolf-Dietrich Schilling, the event "will further boost our bilateral economic relations."

"It has to be seen within the framework of a number of important new initiatives to further expand the existing successful and high volume economic ties between Egypt and Germany," he said.

German exports to Egypt grew by 18 per cent in 1996 making it Germany's second biggest trading partner in the Middle East.

New Valley incentives

THE GOVERNMENT announced this week a number of incentives available to investors participating in the development of the New Valley area.

The incentives, discussed during the Cabinet meeting early this week, include a 20-year exemption of taxes and fees, beginning with the date water is released into the land. All equipment and machinery, transportation vehicles and production lines needed for the projects will also be exempted from customs duties.

According to the new decision, the government will also make available irrigation water and electrical grids on the fringes of the agricultural lands. Each company is to carry out the necessary extension into its own land.

The General Authority for Development Projects is to specify the reclaimable areas, with the minimum set at 25,000 feddans to allow for the establishment of large projects in the area.

The reclaimable and cultivable lands are to be sold at LE50 per feddan on condition that the government bear no expenses for the establishment of infrastructural services. These will be sold to companies or institutions with 51 per cent Egyptian share holdings.

Fruits instead of tenants?

Tenant farmers have been unhappy about the liberalisation of land rent, due in October. But what about the crops? asks **Gamal Essam El-Din**

Laws regulating landlord - tenant relationship during the period of 1952-1997

Law	Content	Land rent
1). Law 178/1952 9 September 1952	Maximum ownership of land per person = 200 feddans; " " per family = 300 feddans	7 times the land tax
2). Law 127/1961	Maximum ownership of land per person = 100 feddans; " " per family = 150 feddans	same
3). Law 50/1969	Maximum ownership of land per person = 50 feddans	same
4). Law 96/1992	Maximum ownership of land per person = 100 feddans	From 7 to 22 times the land tax for a grace period of 5 years, then left to market forces in October 1997

As the 1 October deadline draws near for the implementation of a controversial land rental law that could force almost one million of Egypt's tenant farmers off lands they have farmed for decades, agricultural economists are divided over its impact on production.

The law, passed in 1992, raised the land rents from seven to 22 times the value of land tax, but allowed for a five-year grace period ending in the beginning of October 1997. Following the deadline, land rents will be determined by the forces of supply and demand.

Clashes between landlords and tenants since the law was passed have left 14 people dead and hundreds, including journalists and lawyers, arrested on charges of inciting public unrest.

The implementation of the law has created a rift not only between tenants and landlords, but also between experts over its expected impact on agricultural production.

Agricultural economists have voiced different opinions, some pessimistically arguing that it is part of the World Bank/IMF-inspired structural adjustment policies which led to a deterioration in agricultural production and living conditions of the rural population in many Third World countries.

Others, however, state that the law is part and parcel of the new liberalisation policies which have so far led to raising productivity rates and invoking a spirit of entrepreneurship in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil, a Cairo University economics professor who opposes the implementation of the law, argues that its full implementation will bring about a radical change in cropping patterns and promote the growing trend of using cultivable land for non-agricultural purposes. It will also lead to wide-scale rural poverty through evicting a lot of skilled agricultural labour from the land, he said.

Abdel-Fadil asserted that unleashing market forces in the area of agrarian landlord-tenant relationship will push both landowners and tenants to switch to the cultivation of more easily cultivated and lucrative export-led crops such as vegetables, fruit, medicinal and herbal crops, at the expense of key staples.



Could the new law boost Egypt's agricultural production?

According to Ministry of Agriculture statistics, approximately 95 per cent of the cash-rent land area is cultivated with "strategic" crops such as cotton, wheat, rice, maize and onions.

Naguib El-Hilali, dean of Cairo University's Faculty of Agriculture, argues that most of the cash-rent lands in governorates surrounding Cairo, such as Giza, Fayoum, Beni Suef and Qalyubiya, are the most likely to witness a dramatic change in their cropping patterns as a result of the implementation of the new law.

"For tenant farmers and private landowners who will choose to tend their land themselves, vegetable and fruit crops will be their main focus of cultivation," said El-Hilali. "Not only do these crops yield good profits, but they are also low in their production costs and have at least two seasons per year, compared to traditional crops."

El-Hilali, maintained that the phasing out of the old government controls on crop areas, prices and output, as part of the new liberalisation policies, has encouraged the switch to export crops over staples.

According to a recent report by the Shura Council, liberalisation policies led to increasing the vegetable and fruit areas by as high as 30.4 per cent and 47.3 per cent respectively over the last five years.

"This switch to non-traditional crops will gain a greater momentum in Egypt through the full implementation of the new land law next October, especially in areas around Cairo," said El-Hilali.

The impact of this switch is likely to be felt both economically and socially.

In Beni Suef, a violent confrontation between a landowner and a number of tenants erupted in the village of Boosh over an attempt to evict farmers so that the land could be used to cultivate fruits and vegetables. And in Fayoum, an area of roughly 17,000 feddans, now cultivated with cotton, is also expected to be used for growing vegetables and fruits because most landowners there are likely to opt to leasing the land to agri-businessmen.

Ahmed El-Eissawi, deputy chairman of the People's Assembly Agricultural Committee, himself a farmer, also agrees that cash crop production will overshadow the cultivation of other key crops.

"Most farm producers are now aware that these crops have excellent windows of opportunity for export to certain countries, especially the European Union," he said. "The yield of a feddan cultivated with vegetables brings in between LE3,000 to LE7,000 in profits."

One way of guarding against this emerging trend, El-Hilali suggested, is to ban the cultivation of vegetables and fruits in the law's area of cash-rent land for five years.

It is a suggestion, however, which Gamal Siam, chairman of Cairo University's Agricultural Economics Research Centre, vehemently rejects, arguing instead that the new law will not lead to any significant change in cropping patterns. Siam, speaking in favour of the new law, said that the liberalisation of Egyptian agricultural sector five years ago made the cultivation of traditional crops as lucrative and profitable as vegetables and fruits.

Removing government price controls on crops as wheat, cotton, and rice have made them very profitable crops although their production inputs soared high in the same period, he said.

And, added Siam, the land area which will be subject to the law's full application next October is only one million feddans, about 13 per cent of the country's 7.8 million feddans of cultivated lands.

"We have to ask ourselves why the farmers in an area of about 7 million feddans, which is outside the law's jurisdiction, did not switch to growing vegetables and fruits," he stated.

"The reason is that while prices of cotton and cereal crops climbed high, those of vegetables and fruits remained relatively stable," said Siam, who rejected claims that the new law, coupled with the EU market demand, will be the main catalysts for promoting the trend for growing export crops.

"One of the main reasons behind the current failure of Egypt to conclude a partnership agreement with the EU is that the EU firmly rejects any increase in export volumes of a number of Egyptian crops, notably vegetables and fruits," said Siam.

Opponents of the law also argue that its full implementation next October is expected to increase the loss of fertile land to urbanisation. With landowners empowered to evict tenants, they will now be able to do whatever they want with their land — a right they previously were not afforded.

"The application of the new law will encourage the sale of land for non-agricultural activities, especially with an increase in demand for land near major urban areas like Cairo and Alexandria," says economist Abdel-Fadil.

Ministry of Agriculture statistics reveal that although Egypt was able to reclaim 1.6 million feddans of desert land in the last 15 years, about a million feddans of fertile land was lost in the old valley to urban encroachment in the same period. About 60,000 feddans per year are lost to housing and infrastructure and harrowing of the topsoil for the making of red bricks.

Radwan El-Shair, an MP for Giza, agrees that there is a strong possibility that the new land law could lead to the further loss of fertile land. Giza, where the area cultivated on a cash-rent basis is about 54,000 feddans, is highly susceptible to this trend because it is a major tourist destination, he said.

"The law will undoubtedly push prices of agricultural land around tourist sites to dramatic levels. The average price per feddan has now climbed to one million pounds in the cultivated area surrounding the Pyramids and overlooking the Nile," said El-Shair.

But El-Hilali of Cairo University, argued that the new law cannot lead to the loss of land to urbanisation purposes, simply because a military decree issued in 1996 strictly bans the use of agricultural land for urbanisation purposes. The decree raised the penalty for such violations from three to five years in prison.

The new land law, he said, will actually serve to convince most landowners that investing in land could be more attractive than real estate or tourism — especially if they introduce new sophisticated techniques of cultivation and irrigation.

It was the old land laws, stated El-Hilali, coupled with the subsidy policies, that led farmers to use poor quality production inputs. Similarly, tenant farmers were less inclined to take the financial risk required to upgrade quality because they realised that on the domestic market all levels of quality were acceptable.

According to El-Hilali, the old land law was the main factor responsible for the country's high agricultural trade deficit. In 1996, agriculture made up LE8.5 billion of Egypt's total LE28 billion trade deficit, despite the fact that Egypt was able to raise the productivity rates of most crops in the last 15 years.

El-Hilali also pointed out that the new law will encourage landlords to consolidate their holdings and establish larger farms. This will allow them to take fuller advantage of the benefits afforded under an economy of scale which, in turn, will help the national economy.

According to a Shura Council report on the new 1997-2002 socio-economic development plan, agricultural liberalisation policies, including the new land law, are expected to raise the value of agricultural income from their current level of LE42.3 billion to LE52 billion in 2002. Similarly, agricultural production is expected to climb from LE56.4 billion in 1997 to LE68 billion in 2002.

Opponents of the law also argue that it will lead to wide-scale rural poverty, as thousands of small tenant farmers are evicted from their lands, unable to pay the new rental rates.

"The law will result in an expected increase in mechanised agriculture, resulting in high rates of unemployment among a large segment of skilled farmers who had been tenants on the land for a long period of time," said economist Abdel-Fadil.

Raising the land rents to unprecedented levels will also lead to an inequitable distribution of income between landlords and tenants, he argued.

"Skilled agricultural tenants in this situation will either have to accept extremely low wages or... be unemployed," said Abdel-Fadil.

To offset this effect, Abdel-Fadil suggested establishing a fund which could be financed by a consortium of commercial banks to provide farmers with long term loans with low interest rates.

Gamal Siam, however, pointed out that unemployment rates in rural areas are already high, mainly due to rapid population growth. The law, he said, will not increase this figure significantly.

Market report

Trading doubles

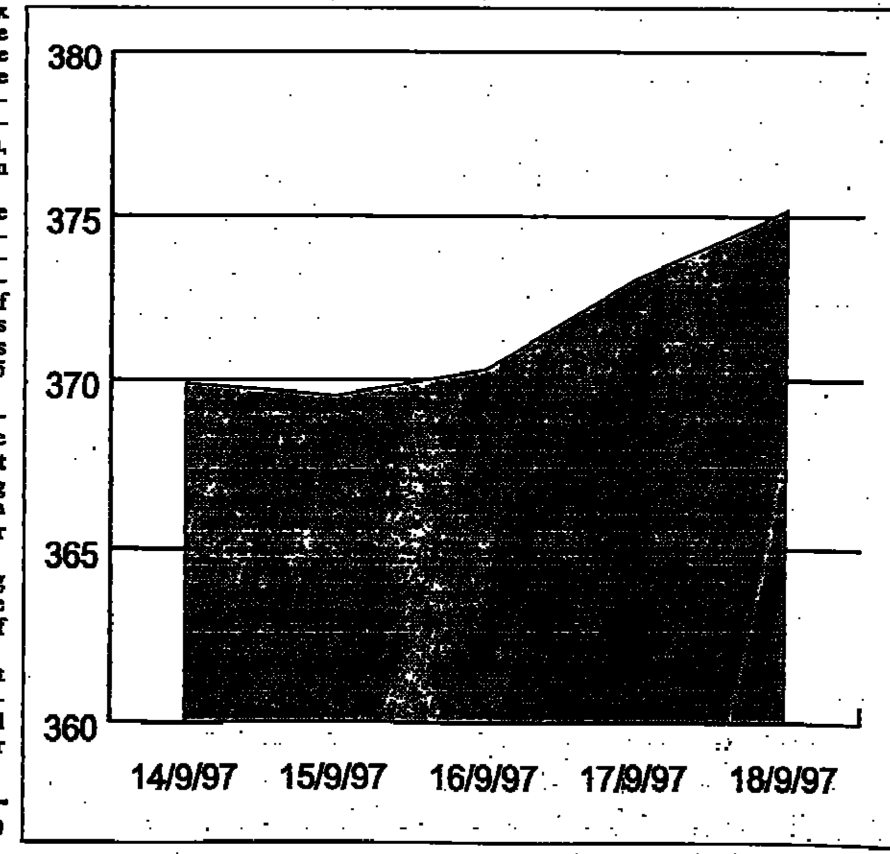
THE GENERAL Market Index registered a 3.64 point increase and closed at 375.19 for the week ending 18 September. The total market trading almost doubled compared to the week before, reaching LE517 million, the value of over seven million shares traded over the week.

Ameriya Cement topped the list in terms of the value and volume of shares traded and its value. With 2.25 million shares, accounting for 31.87 per cent of the total number of shares changing hands, Ameriya's share value increased by LE1.05 to close at LE88.02.

Shares of the Arab Development and International Trade company recorded the greatest increase in share value, closing at LE32.55 per share after a 15.75 per cent increase over their opening price.

Shares of Alexandria Spinning And Weaving dropped in value by over nine per cent to level off at LE31.39.

Also during the week, as part of the privatisation program, El-Giza General Contractors sold 720,000 shares, valued at over LE34 million.



Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

In the shadow of Oslo

If anything is to be retrieved from the ruins of the peace process, writes **Hassan Nafaa**, the Arabs must adopt new methods of conflict management, and cease to rely on the good will of others

Are there lessons to be learned four years after Oslo? Are those four years sufficient for evaluating this unique experiment between the two parties directly involved in the conflict? Or is more time needed? The objective assessment of the Oslo experiment should be based on the two issues now considered as non-arguable.

The first is that Oslo was not preordained. Oslo was an option accepted by the Palestinian leadership of its own free will. One of the options before Oslo was the distribution of roles among the Palestinian delegation that participated in the Madrid conference, which could then have undertaken the negotiations according to the Madrid formula, in coordination with the other Arab parties. This option would have provided the PLO with a broader margin for manoeuvre. At the same time, the Palestinian delegation would not have been entitled to sign anything without the PLO's authorisation. But the PLO leadership preferred, for reasons of its own, to negotiate with Israel secretly and behind the backs of the Arab delegations who participated in Madrid, including the Palestinian delegation itself.

The second issue furnishes evidence that both Israel and the PLO have completely different assessments of the methods and mechanisms of conflict management under Oslo. Perhaps this great divergence in evaluating matters may shed light *on the great mystery that* shrouded the text of the accords. President Hafez Al-Assad aptly noted that each article requires another treaty to clarify its context. It *would appear* that each side has tried to conceal its true intentions behind that ambiguity.

What is worthy of concern *and consideration in* connection with the Oslo Accords is the huge difference between the two sides, Israel and the PLO, and the way each side manages its conflict with the other. The Israeli decision to negotiate secretly with the PLO reflected a particularity of the Labour Party's nature and its method of dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was, nevertheless, in complete conformity with the strategy, objectives and parametres of the Zionist movement. The Palestinian decision, on the other *hand*, was *dictated* by circumstantial evaluations relating to the Palestinian leadership alone vis-à-vis extremely difficult variables, and in the total absence of any Arab or Palestinian strategy to deal with the situation.

The policies adopted by the successive Israeli governments have been remarkably consistent. Those policies reflect a high degree of concord around objectives and ultimate goals *in their management* of the conflict with the Arabs. I do not claim that there is a single Israeli or Zionist vision concerning the final settlement with the Arabs in general or the Palestinians in particular. Differences *in opinion* with respect to this issue, generally within the Zionist movement or the Israeli community, have been and still are real and intense. Though disagreements are sharp between the *most important* political trends on the Israeli front, as represented by the Labour and Likud parties, such disharmony has never involved the ultimate objectives 'of the Zionist movement; it has been restricted to questions *of means*, mechanisms and tactics.

The basic difference between the two lies in the pragmatism of the Labour Party, while the Likud is governed by ideological precepts and religious convictions. That is why the latter has always been more candid and, therefore, more realistic in its expression of 'the reality of the Zionist project and its ultimate goal.

It is, therefore, imperative to avoid the danger of believing that there are two sides in Israel: one side asking for peace with the Arabs, the other pushing for war. This kind of classification is not only naive and superficial, but intentionally conceived in order to delude the Arabs and undermine their resistance, as preliminary to imposing the demands of the Zionist project. Only then will Israeli victory be final.

Neither Labour nor the Likud makes any allusion to peace with the Arabs involving an "historic compromise". Each has a set concept as to conflict management. They may differ in certain aspects, yet they are not contradictory. They have always been complementary. The methods on both sides coincide regarding the "settlement" on the strategic level. Both have insisted on negotiating with each Arab side separately. Again, both insisted on maintaining their overwhelming military supremacy over all the Arabs combined. Both controlled the pace of the peace negotiations, and both were keen to break up the peace process into bite-size pieces.

The Likud had concluded the agreement with Egypt, and the Labour Party has signed an accord with the PLO. In both cases, the *methodology used was identical* with regard to both motives and objectives. In Egypt's case, the aim was to isolate it, preliminary to besieging the Levant. With the assassination of President Sadat, and the failure of the Israeli plan in Lebanon, as well as the Palestinian Intifada, Likud set out to freeze the settlement process, awaiting better conditions.

In the *Palestinians'* case, the Labour Party's aim was to abort the Intifada, to contain the PLO at the lowest possible level of weakness and isolation, and to liquidate Hamas before decisively ending the "problem of Palestine". When events evolved in a different direction, and Hamas, together with the Lebanese resistance, gained in momentum, while attempts to isolate Syria failed, the Labour Party froze *the settlement process once again.*

In both cases, the Israeli governments, Likud and Labour, did not make any real concessions on land, or recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Moreover, the *collapse of the peace* process had begun under the Labour government, before it was confirmed under the Likud-led government of Netanyahu.

Nobody can prophesy how the peace *settlement would* have evolved under Oslo if Peres and not Netanyahu had won last year's elections. It is highly probable that procrastination on the main issues, such as Jerusalem, the refugees, settlements, *and others*, was not calculated to provide a climate more conducive to their resolution. The intention was to gain time, impose a new de facto situation with respect to the land, and to secure additional concessions from *the* Palestinians as their negotiating power deteriorated.

A simple point will substantiate this suggestion: settlements, particularly in the Jerusalem area, expanded by 40 per cent during the two years following the Oslo Accords. It is also common knowledge that the decision to build a new settlement in Jebel Abu Ghneim, as well as *all* the bulldozing necessary before construction commenced, had begun before Netanyahu took office.

Those are but a few examples out of many others. Yossi Belin, a prominent Labour "dove", declared that the difference between the Labour and Likud never involved objectives and ultimate goals — only the methods used to achieve them. He believes that Netanyahu has grossly damaged Israeli interests. His aggressive attitude led to the freezing of the peace process and the isolation of Israel. The Labour Party, in this perspective, could have acquired more land while ensuring the continued viability of the peace process. The only conclusion to be drawn is that the Zionist movement is still united over the conditions of the final settlement. It is obvious that little has changed in its understanding of peace with the Arabs. The only possible change might be a tendency towards more extremism.

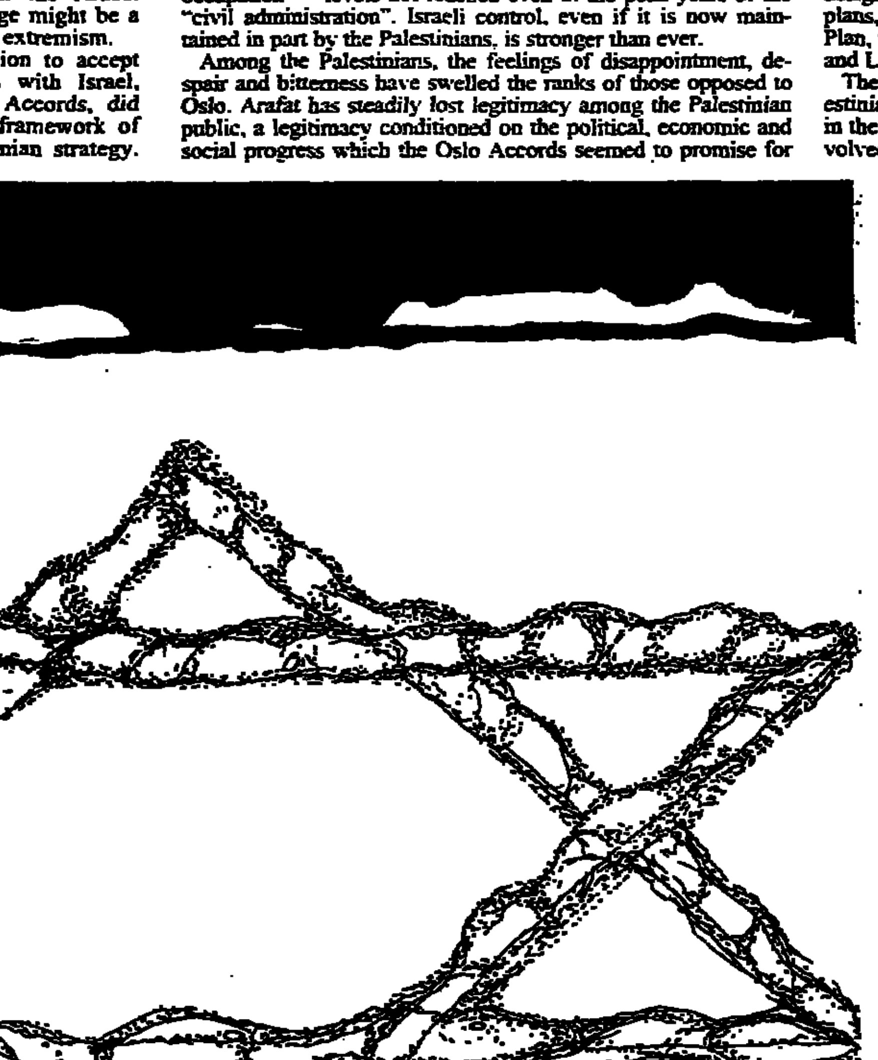
The Palestinian decision to accept the secret negotiations with Israel, *followed by the Oslo Accords, did* not evolve within the framework of a clear Arab or Palestinian strategy. The decision was made without consultation, in reaction to certain regional and international events, and the Palestinian leadership committed definite strategic errors, seeming to rely mainly on Providence. In fact, were it not for Egyptian diplomacy and Syria's decision to refrain from obstructing the *implementation* of the accords, the situation could have been far worse than it is today.

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that we are all in the same boat, and that peace is still a distant prospect. The *final status* settlement, to date, has not been clearly defined. It remains uncertain where the current settlement is heading, or whether it is to be found on another track altogether.

It is comprehensible that the Arabs' desire for peace is not sufficient, particularly if our conditions include Israel's withdrawal from all land occupied since 1967, including Eastern Jerusalem, the establishment *of an independent* Palestinian state in the Western Bank and Gaza, and Jerusalem as the capital of this state. Oslo did not bring the Arabs closer to that sort of peace, but only served to alienate them further. Even the Labour Party never interpreted the Oslo Accords as restricting Israel's freedom to build more settlements, or as a step towards the establishment of the independent state of Palestine. Although some Israelis are now openly talking about a Palestinian state, nobody has indicated that it will have sovereign status, nor that it will occupy the West Bank and Gaza, including Eastern Jerusalem.

In fact, ever since Camp David, the Arabs have relied on the good will of Israel, or, at best, on the US's ability and desire to bring pressure to bear on Israel. But Israel's intentions are not in the least *favourable*, and *there is no shred of* evidence that the US is willing or even capable to put pressure on Israel. This was always evident before Oslo, and is now a blinding truth. It is now incumbent on the Arabs to abandon the manner in which the peace settlement is being conducted. It must be replaced by a new method of conflict management with Israel, one that focuses on the Arabs' own power, and not on the good will of others.

The writer is professor of political science at Cairo University.



Aims and ideology, alive and kicking

Oslo is a trap, writes **Tikva Honig-Parnass**: a triumph of Zionist aims over Palestinian rights, and a Pyrrhic victory for the Israelis themselves

Many today believe that the process which began with the signing of the Oslo Accords has been wiped out by Netanyahu. Israel, under his leadership, has been aggressively pursuing policies of land confiscations, settlement expansion and the demolition of homes; almost no political prisoners have been released; and many crucial sections of the Oslo Accords — such as safe passage between Gaza and Jericho, permission to build an air and sea port, and the second redeployment of the Israeli troops — have not been implemented. The policy of "routine" closures as well as the siege on the West Bank cities announced by Israel after the recent suicide attacks in Jerusalem, have caused extreme, unprecedented economic strangulation there. The dependency of Palestinians on Israel has attained proportions not seen since the earliest days of the occupation — levels not reached even in the peak years of the "civil administration". Israeli control, even if it is now maintained in part by the Palestinians, is stronger than ever.

Among the Palestinians, the feelings of disappointment, despair and bitterness have swelled the ranks of those opposed to Oslo. *Arafat has steadily lost legitimacy among the Palestinian* public, a legitimacy conditioned on the political, economic and social progress which the Oslo Accords seemed to promise for Palestinian society. With Arafat's regime weakened, Hamas has been able to renew its bombings inside Israel, and it has become increasingly difficult for Arafat to respond to Israeli and US pressure to liquidate the "infrastructure of terrorism" without inciting the majority of the Palestinian nation to rise against him.

Moreover, there are those who believe that the undermining of Arafat's position is a deliberate Israeli policy objective, designed to force him to surrender to Netanyahu's plans for the final status, or, *if he* refuses to do so, to find a replacement — someone who will be prepared to accept the Israeli and US dictates in full.

Yet — despite appearances — Netanyahu's ambition is not to wipe out the Oslo Accords. It is, rather, to continually improve Israel's position as the negotiations over the final status are approached, *in part by* skipping over the *military* redeployment phases which were supposed to occur prior to the final negotiations. It was the Olso Accords themselves which set the stage for this steady pattern of improvements, by putting off the most critical issues until the last possible moment. Oslo itself allowed Israel to continue to establish facts that would directly *influence the final status (settlements, destruction of the economy*, etc.) and at the same time to impose closures and various sanctions designed to weaken the Palestinians as the time for negotiations approached.

In the meantime, Netanyahu can design the final status map, or even go back and put in revisions as he sees fit. After in*sisting for several months that the map he was about to present* for the final status negotiations would be the "Allon Plus" map (that is, more territories offered to the Palestinians than those offered them in a plan by Yigal Allon in the Labour government of 1968), he now declares his support of an "Allon-minus" map — his idea evidently being that "as dinner nears the appetite grows."

The elevation of the security issue (Israeli security, of course) to the primary topic on the agenda of the Oslo framework, and the shunting of the other substantive issues to the sidelines, has served to justify all Israel's activities in the Occupied Territories: sanctions, enforced starvation, closures. The US has been a partner to this scheme, as was evident during the visit of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

From the outset, the aims of her visit were, on one hand, to encourage Netanyahu in his demands for security, and, on the other, to create the im*pression that the Oslo process* had not lost all signs of life. Albright did not promise the Palestinians that settlements would be stopped, but was content with an appeal that Israel "reduce the pace of construction" — without even pressing for any commitments to that effect. Thus it appears the US is granting Netanyahu more time in which to try and bring the Palestinians into full compliance with his plans — all without destroying "the Oslo framework".

It is not Netanyahu alone who takes this view of the peace process. In essentials, few real differences distinguish the Labour Party and the parties of the ruling coalition (except the parties of the extreme religious and secular right and the ideological settlers). The map of the final status is the same; and the same use is made of the security issue for brutal suppression of the Palestinians — about which the opposition has been almost completely mute.

The goals at the heart of the Oslo Accords are the broad common denominator which today substantially unites the right with what Israelis term their "left". The accords reflect Israel's role as part of the American order in the Middle East, and Israel has worked as an active partner in this design — framing it in the pattern of previous Israeli plans, those of both Labour and Likud (the 1968 Allon Plan, the Shamir-Peres-Baker plan of 1989, and the Sharon and Labour plan of 1992.)

The primary objective of the accords was to end the Palestinian problem, which has been the *source of instability* in the Middle East. But this "end" to the problem never involved recognising the national rights of the Palestinian people. On the contrary: the goal was to bring it to defeat, so as to carry on with the programme of Zionist colonialism and the apartheid regime that has *emerged in the territories* occupied in 1967.

The apartheid regime is so constructed as to remove the Palestinians from the Israeli judicial framework, thus making it easier to suppress any Intifada. At the same time, any sort of sovereignty granted to a created Palestinian entity (including *trappings of statehood*) *is meant only* to serve the aims of allocating, between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the responsibility for protecting the order there.

A cornerstone of that regional order, in which Oslo also figures, is the recognition of Israel. Leg*itimisation of the* "Jewish state" was supposed to bring about normalisation of relations between Israel and the major Arab states, so as to make it easier for Israel to fill its role as American imperialism's local police officer. Along with explicit recognition of Israel came the smearing of the national movement of *the Palestinians, who must now promise to* "abandon the way of terrorism" and thus, by implication, justify Zionism.

Indeed, the Oslo Accords constitute a victory for the Zionist project and a realisation of its objectives — goals shared for the most part by the fathers of *both the Labor movement (Berel Katzenelson*, A D Gordon, Ben Gurion) and the revisionist right (most prominently Ze'ev Jabotinsky).

As Ze'ev Sternhal, a professor of political science and the historian of the Labour movement, testifies, the principal features of the Zionist programme were: *creation of an exclusive Jewish* state in all the territory of mandatory Palestine by conquest ("conquest through Labour" and "conquest of the land" until the 1940s, and later by resorting to force when it became possible); belief in the exclusive historical right of the Jewish na*tion and rejection of any collective national* legitimacy for the Palestinians; and a peculiar "organic nationalism" of "blood and soil", the homegrown form of "socialist nationalism", with its lack of liberal and universalist foundations — these were the values shared by all the various *branches of Zionism.*

To this day, the approach that rejects any view of the individual as of value in himself, and instead considers him to be an organic particle in a Nation whose goals are supreme in the scale of values — this approach allows large portions of Israeli society to *huddle under the slogan of "national security" and, in its* name, to suppress basic human rights in the Occupied Territories and even in Israel.

Indeed, sociology professor Baruch Kimmerling of the Hebrew University defined Israeli society as follows: "Her basic characteristic, that of being a settler society which must consolidate *itself* in a *given territory*, living by the sword and with a need to 'vacate' a space for itself, remains constant. In the 'post-colonial' world order political culture, it is a society plagued by the problem of existential legitimacy. It has to repeatedly explain to itself why it chose the 'land of Israel' as its target territory for colonisation."

This ideology, grounded in the historical-religious myth which provides the sense of ownership rights to all Palestine, has deep roots not just in the extreme right wing but in the Zionism of the Labour movement. These beliefs thoroughly permeate the culture and the hegemonic *ideology of Israel to this day. The ideology continues* to supply the moral and motivational fuel which drives the engines of interests shared by American imperialism and its Israeli client — as can be seen both in the Oslo Accords and in the ways it has been implemented.

Yet the victory represented by Oslo is a Pyrrhic one, not only because on the road to implementing it both peoples can still expect much blood, sweat and tears, but mostly because in the longer term, precisely when Zionism achieves its full victory, it will unavoidably become a bloody trap for the people of Israel.

The writer is director of the Jerusalem-based Alternative Information Centre.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Who's being punished?

The United States has reacted with the expected measure of alarm at the mention of Libya. The reason for the US's "grave concerns" this time was an Arab League resolution that urges *member states to defy the UN-imposed sanctions on Libya*, and allow flights for humanitarian reasons, import of medicines and the transport of the dead.

US and UN officials are concerned that such a move would undermine the UN's standing as a world body, as well as ease up the pressure on Libya which the US accuses of sponsoring terrorism.

But much like the sanctions in Iraq have hurt only the Iraqi people, those in Libya have done little more than jeopardise the lives and welfare of nearly five million Libyans. Is this justifiable punishment for Libya's alleged role in the 1988 downing of the plane over Lockerbie?

Rather, it smacks of a brand of collective punishment which seems to be the policy endorsed by the US and Israel as a means of achieving their individual ends.

While Gaddafi has said he is willing to hand over the two Libyans accused of carrying out the bombing of the flight, so long as they are tried on neutral territory, the US has rejected this option. It wants them to be tried either in the US or Scotland. If this were to happen, there would be little chance of their receiving a fair trial.

If the US is truly interested in justice, then it should be willing to agree to both Gaddafi's proposal and the lifting of the sanctions. Denying the Libyan people the means of securing the medical care they need, as well as the right to travel safely to places of worship in no way means that Libya is being set free.

Given the current state of the region, it seems more prudent to have the international community work together in alleviating the suffering of those living under oppression of one form or another, than to blindly abiding by a decision, irrespective of the impact it has on the lives of millions.

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Main office
AL-AHRAM, Al-Galaa St. Cairo.
Telephones: 5786100/5786200/5786300/5786400/5786500. Direct: 5786064
Telex: 20185/93346 Fax:5786089 /5786833
E-mail: weekly@ahram.org.eg

Overseas offices

USA
Washington DC: Atef El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, Suite 1258, 529 National Press Bldg, Washington DC 20045; Tel: (202)-737-2121/2122.
New York: Atef El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, 39th Fl., Chrysler Bldg., 405 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10174-0300; Tel: (212)972 6440; Telex: 497 9426 ITT U.I.; Fax: (212) 286 0285.
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United Kingdom
London: Amr Abdel-Samie. Al-Ahram Office, 203 - 209 North Gower street London NW1 2NJ
Tel: 0171 388 1155, Fax: 0171 388 3130

France
Paris: Sherif El-Shoubashy, Bureau Al-Ahram 26, Rue Marbeuf, 75008 Paris; Tel: (1) 537 72700; Al-Ahram F.; Fax: (1) 428-93963.

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Vienna: Mustafa Abdalla, 2331 Vosendorf Orts Str. 253; Tel: 692965/ 694805; Telex: 13 2726 GIGI A; Telefax: 694805.

Greece
Athens: Abdel-Azim Darwish, 69 Solonos St., Third floor, Kolonaki 106-79, Athens, Greece. Tel. and Fax :3634503.

Japan
Tokyo: Mohamed El-Dessouki, Duke Aoyama 4-11, Higashi 4 - Chome Shibuya - Ku, Room 402, Tokyo; Tel: (03) 340 63944; Fax: (03) 340 6625

Italy
Mustafa Abdallah [S.A.B. 2000] 00191 ROMA-V. Guido Bant, 34. Tel: 3332250 Fax: 3332294

Brazil
Rio de Janeiro: Ahmed Shedid, Cx. Postal 2395, CEP. 20001.

South Africa
Johannesburg: Mohamed Sabreen, Oxford Manor, 196 Oxford road-Northland 2116, Johannesburg. Tel.and Fax: (011)4477425.

A glimmer of hope?

There is still a possibility that the peace process will get back on track, writes Ibrahim Nafie, if the US takes its role as an honest broker seriously



US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's recent visit to the Middle East certainly did not succeed in solving all the problems that are currently plaguing the peace process, but at the *same time, we cannot say that the visit has* been entirely futile. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the US has relinquished its responsibilities as a sponsor of the peace process and abandoned the region to the very circumstances that brought the process to its current deadlock. It would be difficult to imagine that a great power such as the US, whose secretary of state has declared that the collapse of the peace process would run counter to America's vital interests in the region, would behave in this manner.

If Albright has been unable to dispel the cumulative effects of Israeli policy on the peace process since Netanyahu's accession to power a year and a half ago, her visit has nevertheless sparked new hopes of bringing the peace process back on course. President Mubarak expressed these sentiments in the joint press conference he held with Albright when he said: "There is still hope and we intend to exert greater efforts in the cooperative endeavour to push the peace process forward, because we are eager to bring stability to the region by reaching a comprehensive settlement."

At the same press conference, the US secretary of state reaffirmed the fundamental principles of the peace process. She said there must be a renewed sense of partnership between the two sides, a mutual commitment to fight terrorism and a commitment to cease any measures taken unilaterally that might jeopardise the peace process. She also reaffirmed the US position that a peaceful settlement must be based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace.

Evidently, the US has decided to shoulder a major responsibility in the coming phase, a task that Albright appears to have taken to heart by following up on her visit to the region with an invitation to the Israelis and Palestinians to send delegations to Washington for talks this week. The central problem, however, is not that of differences in the interpretation of the articles of the Oslo Accords, but rather Netanyahu's attitude toward these accords. Netanyahu's antagonism toward Oslo has been clear from the outset. Because of this, the US must do more than simply urge both sides to talk. It must summon the determination to prevent them from reneging on obligations to which they have already committed themselves in signed agreements.

Netanyahu's attempts to evade his commitments are legion; his and the Likud Party's antagonism to the Oslo Accords is renowned, and long predates the terrorist operations that they use as a pretext to criticise these accords. When asked during the 1996 electoral campaign, whether he would abide by Oslo, his answer was typically evasive. He said that he would not automatically commit himself to the accords if he won the elections, but he would insist that the PA abide by its commitments. Then, after coming to power, his government pursued a policy deliberately intended to provoke the Palestinians and thus to justify reneging on the agreements.

This attitude was apparent to the US assistant secretary of defence under former US President Reagan, who wrote in a recent issue of *Commentary* that the major task before Netanyahu's government is to convince the Arabs, the Israelis and the world in general that Israel has an alternative to Oslo that it will opt for if necessary. From the outset, he says, it was understood that the Oslo agreements would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state; still, Netanyahu has repeatedly declared *that he would not accept a sovereign Palestinian state*. If the Israeli government continues to oppose the creation of a Palestinian state, this in turn will lead to the breakdown of the final status negotiations.

Since Netanyahu cannot appear before Israeli public opinion to have caused the collapse of the Oslo Accords, which are the basis of all peace negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, he has attempted to exploit the recent terrorist bombings in Jerusalem in order to widen the breach with the PA and provide his long-awaited pretext for reneging on Israel's commitments. Connected with this is his bid to proceed directly to the final status negotiations, another ruse to evade implementing Israeli commitments under Oslo and unilaterally impose measures of his own. It is for this reason that he has revived the so-called Allon Plus project with accompanying maps of the territories which the Israelis would transfer to the PA. According to Netanyahu's political adviser at the time (and currently Israel's delegate to the UN), the purpose of announcing the plan is to diminish Palestinian hopes of establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza with its capital in Jerusalem.

How different is Netanyahu's attitude from that of the former Labour government, which signed the Oslo Accords and which viewed the PA as a partner in process in which both sides must cooperate in order to overcome the obstacles to peace. This is why Albright's assertion that all sides must abide by their commitments, in accordance with the principles of the Oslo Accords, is so important at this juncture. The current government in Israel must be made to realise that Oslo is a cooperative endeavour. It must cease all unilateral actions and seek to create an atmosphere that will enhance the prospects of success of a final peace agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

But politics involves more than restating principles. It requires action to transform theory into practical resolve. This applies more than ever at present to the US, which risks losing its credibility as a major partner in the peace process if it does not follow through on its official declarations. I still hope that Albright will pursue a policy that translates her statements into practical steps and safeguards the peace process from attempts to sidestep commitments. It is my sincerest hope that forthcoming developments will bear out my optimism, not only for the sake of a just peace in the Middle East but also to safeguard the true interests of the US in the region, interests that are jeopardised by Netanyahu's reckless policies.

An American-Israeli divergence?

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed asks whether Madeleine Albright's visit to the Middle East reflected a shift in the Clinton administration's *attitude towards the various protagonists in the Arab-Israeli conflict*

In reply to a question on the results of the US secretary of state's recent visit to the Middle East, President Mubarak said in his joint press conference with President Assad last Thursday that "Mrs Albright wants to take the peace process to a successful conclusion. She reiterated the principles she had stressed in her speech last August to the Press Club in Washington and which received the support of President Clinton: land in exchange for peace, Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, no unilateral steps by any party and other encouraging points". President Assad agreed with this analysis, and added that "Mrs Albright made friendly overtures, spoke with apparent good faith and was obviously keen on moving forward with the peace process. But the success of the peace process entails enormous effort."

It is worth noting in this connection that the present secretary of state has broken with a tradition established by her predecessors, who *made the Middle East peace process one of* their top priorities as soon as they took office. For over a year, Madeleine Albright virtually ignored the Middle East, paying her first visit to the region only a few days ago. How then to explain the positive reactions her visit drew from the leaders of Egypt, Syria and Palestine? Should they be interpreted as tactical moves *aimed at taking advantage of the reservations* expressed by spokesmen of Netanyahu's government concerning certain statements Albright made during and after her visit to Israel, or do they in fact betray an awareness on the part of Arab leaders that a new strategic opportunity is on the cards?

A scenario worth contemplating here is one that can be deduced from the strong relations which linked Clinton to Rabin and Peres on the one hand, and what the press attributed to bad chemistry between the US president and Netanyahu on the other, despite the many points in common between the two men, who are approximately the same age and had similar upbringings in the United States. It is no secret that Clinton supported Peres against Netanyahu in the last Israeli general elections. In this he was motivated more by political considerations than by personal likes and dislikes, *for the peace formula proposed by Peres could* ensure both the security of Israel and the stability of the Arab oil region so crucial for US interests, while that put forward by Netanyahu placed Israel's security requirements above — and often in contradiction with — all else, even legitimate Arab demands, thus threatening to destabilise the entire Arab world, *including the oil region.*

It can be assumed that when Netanyahu was elected despite Clinton's will, he was in a position to blackmail the American president because of the latter's dependence on the Jewish lobby in the United States. For example, he succeeded in forcing the American president to remain silent when he alleged that Rabin and, *more particularly, Peres, had given in on Israeli* rights by accepting the land for peace tradeoff, and that he, Netanyahu, would redress that wrong by achieving peace without restoring land and without giving terrorism a chance to retaliate. For a while his scenario appeared to be workable; that is the period during which Mrs Albright held back from visiting the Middle East *while systematically visiting all the other global* hot spots of interest to the United States.

But the spate of suicide bombings in Jerusalem proved Netanyahu's assumptions to be way off the mark and exposed US interests in the region to jeopardy. Clinton hastened to send special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to the region to lay the groundwork for Albright's first visit as secretary of state. Neither Ross nor Albright denied that the issue of Israel's security should retain full priority. The new thing, however, is that both insisted that Israel's security should be defined according to the Clinton administration's perception of what it entails, not to that of the Netanyahu government. A committee was set up to supervise security issues, which included representatives of the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority and the CIA. It was this new development which prompted Arafat, Mubarak and Assad *to hail Albright.*

In other words, the Arab parties praised Mrs Albright not because she offered them anything new, but because she did not support Netanyahu as unconditionally as had been expected. In exchange for depriving the Israeli side of the authority to define the parameters of Israel's security, she required the Arab parties *to renounce their reservations on the up*coming Doha economic conference. As we know, the Madrid conference laid two tracks for the peace process; a bilateral track between Israel and each separate Arab party to resolve the conflict throughout the implementation of the land-for-peace principle, and a multilateral track aimed at consolidating that principle by *giving to the notion of peace a clear content in* its economic and societal aspects, as well as on a number of very specific issues such as environment, refugees, disarmament, including nuclear, etc.

The Doha conference, like the earlier economic conferences in Casablanca, Amman and Cairo, aims at boosting the economic di*mension of peace by promoting a Middle East* market that will include Israel. Mrs Albright's insistence that the conference be held on schedule irrespective of progress in the peace process places her on the same wavelength as Netanyahu, for whom peace is to be exchanged for peace not for land. On this specific issue, there can obviously be no strategic rapproche*ment between the Arab capitals and Washing*ton, whose insistence on an economic conference while Netanyahu continues to flout the principle of land for peace and to pursue his settlement policy is inconsistent with the declared purpose of Mrs Albright's long awaited visit.

From the ashes

By Naguib Mahfouz

The attack on the tourist bus outside the Egyptian Museum made a few things clear.

First, this was not a blow aimed at killing a few foreign tourists, nor was its aim to burn a tourist bus. It was aimed at destroying tourism in Egypt and the Egyptian economy. Tragically, innocent tourists died; but the real target of the operation was not achieved, for tourism and the economy have not suffered. Only a few days after this incident the press has turned its attention to other matters.

The second point to be noted is the role the public played in arresting the criminals, helping the wounded and filming the incident. The active role ordinary Egyptians played clearly shows the true feelings of the population with regard to the acts of violence and what they think of the perpetrators of these acts.

My third point is that these acts of violence cannot damage the Egyptian tourist industry, for there is no country in the world which can offer attractions similar to those afforded by a visit to Egypt. All over the world, people have grown up learning about the glorious civilisation of Ancient Egypt, through schoolbooks, literature, cinema or TV. True tourism is not a matter of travelling from Britain to France, for instance, and I feel convinced that the advantages of Egypt will very soon overcome any fears.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

A senseless act

Al-Ahram: "Members of the public who were in Tahrir Square at the time of the attack behaved in an exemplary way... They acted as though they were part of the security forces and their cooperation led to the arrest of the culprits... Their conduct presented a very favourable picture which was captured on film by the cameras of foreign journalists and sent a message to the world that Egypt is a safe country!"
(Ibrahim Nafie, 20 September)

Al-Gomhuria: "We all believe that Thursday's incident was not planned by anybody other than Saber Farahat, a man who was convicted four years ago on a similar charge and admitted to a mental institution. This brings to mind the following questions: Firstly, are people who are sent to such institutions simply left there or are their cases reviewed every now and then to see what progress they are making? Secondly, can a person who bribed senior doctors and left the hospital to get married, only to commit another crime, be truly considered mad? Also, why are mental institutions supervised by municipalities rather than the Ministry of Health?
(Samir Ragab, 20 September)

Al-Akhbar: "Both police and the public rose to the occasion and behaved in a manner which commanded the respect of the world. Ordinary citizens have always cooperated with the security forces and their cooperation has been instrumental in undermining terrorism. The recent terrorist attack will perhaps cause some cancellations, but it will have no lasting effect on the influx of tourists to this country. Egypt's place on the tourist map is unassailable and isolated incidents like this one can happen anywhere."
(Galal Dweidar, 21 September)

Al-Arabi: "We all know the heavy responsibility shouldered by the security forces and the success they have achieved in their fight against terrorism. We also know that this battle is not over yet and that Egypt continues to be the target of many forces... It is politically short-sighted to insist that terrorism is a mere security issue. In fact, it is a battle on all fronts and it involves economic, social and cultural elements... The government will probably be relieved if the Tahrir Square attack turns out to be *the work of one or two individuals. But the fact* is that a crime has been committed, innocent victims fell, a great harm has been done to the nation and grave mistakes have been committed for which the responsible officials should be held accountable, including the interior minister!"
(Galal Aref, 22 September)

Rose El-Youssef: "The sum total of Albright's efforts is, as expected, a big zero. Those who try to make the US secretary of state look good will not change our opinion of her, an opinion based on her positions concerning the sanctions against Iraq, the extension of Boutros Ghali's term in office and her Zionist views. We live in a Zionist era, faced by a surge of colonialism. The struggle is not merely over borders, nor is it short-term. If our generation fails to liberate the land, we must pass on the banner to another generation. We are not going to give up our rights, land or honour, nor are we going to put our faith in the United States."
(Abdullah Imam, 22 September)

Al-Wafd: "The Tahrir attack calls for a total review of our social, political and moral values. Saber Farahat and his brother will get what they deserve, but Egyptian soil will remain fertile to such crimes so long as democracy is stifled by a one-party system and so long as Egyptians remain on the margins of political life, watching helplessly as acts of thuggery, forgery and embezzlement take place. Crime will continue to thrive so long as lawlessness becomes the norm and the state is doing little to combat it."
(Gamal Badawy, 22 September)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



As the leaders of Egypt and Russia meet this week, they bring with them echoes of past meetings, and a long history of first Soviet-then Russo-Egyptian relations. In contrast to Yeltsin's face, composed of a series of circles, President Mubarak's face is almost Pharaonic in its angularity. Against the smooth silver of the Russian president's buoyant hair, the shiny cheeks, nose and chin which frame a thin-lipped smile, President Mubarak's profile stands out sharply, appearing almost to have been cut out with a scalpel: close-cropped, dark hair, assertive brows, and the strong sweep of nose and chin. While elements of Khrutschev and Gorbachov are clear in Yeltsin's face, the features of Gamal Abdel-Nasser show in pentimento through Mubarak's portrait.



Close up

Salama A. Salama

Blowing in the wind

The most recent meeting of Arab foreign ministers in the Arab League did not come up with much despite the current developments in the Middle East. In general, it reflected a state of Arab apprehension and confusion over the fate of the peace process and the threats to its existence. The Council repeated its requests for the US to fulfil its obligations as outlined by Albright and for the US administration to continue its efforts as sponsor of the peace process.

The Arab position thus appears to be that of a straw in the wind. The American position has wavered so repeatedly that it has become necessary for the Arab parties to remind the US of its commitments to the peace process and to emphasise that it should remain an active participant in accordance with the principles agreed on previously with Russia at the Madrid conference, and with the same logic employed after the Gulf War, when a new era of stability and the peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict seemed to be in the making.

What the world considered the axioms of a peaceful solution, the agreements with the Palestinians and the Jordanians, and the endless negotiations with the Syrians, all need to be reconfirmed from time to time at every meeting of Arab foreign ministers and at every Arab summit meeting — this at a time of erosion of the peace process, fear of Israel's intentions regarding the signed agreements and increasing American reluctance to act as the sponsor of these negotiations.

The Arab foreign ministers' final declaration after this week's meeting is neither more nor less than a reiteration of these principles, in which the Arabs repeat their commitment to peace as a strategic option, and voice the same requests. Many will feel that the Arabs' definition of their position on multi-party negotiations, the freezing of normalisation and making it conditional on progress in the peace process are positive steps in and of themselves. By Arab standards, this is true, in light of the differences that threaten to split the Arabs, the Netanyahu government's constant back-pedalling, its repeated efforts to improve its own positions and built more settlements, as well as the inability of the American administration to make any decisive move against Israel.

This lowest common denominator of Arab agreement was reflected in two critical problems that emerged in the region recently. First, the problem of the Doha conference, to be held in November, and the insistence of both the US and Israel that it be held regardless of any progress in the peace process. The Arab states were unable to come up with any clear position on this problem. Rather, they decided to wait until the last moment, hoping for a miracle that would save them from confrontation with the US — and themselves as well. While Syria insists on boycotting the conference, Qatar insists on holding it; thus each Arab state will have to make its own decision soon.

The other problem concerns the Israeli-Turkish-US manoeuvres. Arab foreign ministers expressed their concern, drawing Turkey's attention to the threats such manoeuvres pose to the security and stability of the region, and voicing their hope that Turkey will reconsider its cooperation with Israel. What the Arab ministers choose to ignore, however, is the responsibility of the US, their main ally, as a third party to these manoeuvres. As is well-known, the Americans depend, for their military presence in the region and for their sales of weapons, on the need of the Gulf states to safeguard themselves from foreign threats. Where, then, does America's responsibility lie? This is what the Arab states were unable to fathom.

Consequently, the meeting of Arab foreign ministers ended with minimum loss and minimum gain, and without any alternative strategy to stir up the stagnant water, apart from waiting for Albright's return.



Soapbox

School days, fool days

As school starts again, I wonder: what are our children going to learn? They should be learning things like mathematics and physics. But ultimately, these sciences are based on logic. Since life around them is so illogical, how can we expect them to believe what they learn at school? Everybody, including schoolchildren, was amazed at the ease with which a few powerful people managed to make LE500 million as credit on real estate valued at less than 10 per cent of this sum. Mathematically, this makes no sense. But some of these big shots, suspected of corruption, were then re-elected to parliament. This is hardly logical. It will not help much at school.

When it comes to science, the situation is probably worse. I am only referring to the lack of a policy on science and technology, to the dramatic brain drain, and to the total chaos of traffic, city expansion and "urban development".

Mathematically illogical corruption, lack of a scientific outlook and planning, and neglect of science and technology are not the only ills which may impede our attempts to "educate" our children. Even if some are properly educated, they may not be needed after graduation. They will have ridiculous salaries and underemployment to look forward to.

Do we have anything rational to teach our children? Maybe we, the parents, should go back to school.



Mohamed El-Sayed Said

This week's Soapbox speaker is deputy director of Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

The hundred years' war

The young people who woke up to find that they had been defeated spent their lives rebelling. Today, writes **Ahmed Abdalla**, many are discovering that they paid the price for many victories, but never won their own battle

The defeat of 1967 was felt by children, young people, adults and the elderly. It was a collective defeat. But not everyone bore responsibility for the "setback": feelings of guilt differed according to age and, of course, the degree of one's direct involvement. In essence, the defeat affected the older generation, the political apparatus, the state and the military. Even though the defeat was collective, only the students, the young people who lived through it, can rightly be called the "generation of 1967. For them, the defeat did not last a moment or six days. It was not just a question of tactical errors in the kind of war that could have been lost or won. The defeat was a shock that knocked the breath out of them and left them reeling, unsure whether they were dead of alive. It also bred anger and rebellion. It was a cornerstone; it shaped this generation's minds and souls, and dictated the course their lives were to take. They bore not only the material consequences, but also a psychological trauma even greater than the military shock itself.

Those who were children in 1967 may not have grasped the implications of the "disaster", and the older generation soon grew accustomed to the double standards that mentioned only "achievements" while ignoring the very real "failures". This was true even before the defeat, but for young people it came as a slap on the face to realise that "victory" and "liberation" were mirages — a question of hypocrisy. This generation had barely finished singing the songs and reciting the poetry: they had only just been taught that they would soon be led to triumph. They heard these promises in school and on the radio, or in the only political organisation they could join: the Nasserist Socialist Youth Organisation.

The young people of 1967 felt the scales fall from their eyes. They could see clearly what Egypt and the Arab world were going through; they were also aware of the differences between themselves and youth elsewhere. Yet official statements were best described by the vernacular poet Ahmad Fouad Negm: "Everything is for the best... Claiming otherwise is empty talk."

Those who dared to "claim otherwise", of course, were those who opposed the regime's policies. Throughout the Nasser era and until the middle of Sadat's presidency, the opposition was forbidden to speak its mind. At best, it could whisper its opinion from the bleachers of the official stadium: the socialist, non-Nasserist voice in the Arab Socialist Union and on the pages of *Al-Tali'a* (published by Al-Ahram), or the Islamist voice from Al-Azhar and the Ministry of *Awqaf* (although a more rebellious underground movement emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1960s). Capitalist ideology also remained marginal, since it spoke the language of economics via the private sector and investments, particularly in the area of real estate and contracting.

Even though the Nasserist state scored victories in economic development, industrialisation, defence of national sovereignty and social equity, the system — on the political level — was totalitarian and oppressive. Political pluralism was prohibited, and a military/civilian one-party elite ruled the country. The freedom to establish political organisations and syndicates, and the expression of independent opinions were abandoned; many of the opposition figures were also abandoned in the oasis prison camps.

The circumstances specific to the young people reflected both the positive and negative aspects of the country's general condition. Nasser's socio-economic accomplishments won him the support and loyalty of many. The most important of these accomplishments were free education and the guarantee of a job for university graduates, which created social mobility and led to the expansion of a new, young middle class. Totalitarian and oppressive practices, on the other hand, prevailed within the state and society as a whole, but particularly in the areas where youth were most likely to be affected: schools, universities, syndicates and clubs.

Before the defeat, young people suffered from a lack of free expression and organisation. This was a real crisis for educated university students and graduates. The political system dealt with this crisis through containment, by limiting freedom of expression further within the official youth organisations. the most important of which was the Socialist Youth Organisation. The state controlled the student unions' administration and controlled the youth organisation through ideology.

Until the defeat, the regime's policy was generally successful: there were no significant mass protests between 1954 and 1967. This success, however, was not absolute. Government candidates failed to win the student union elections: students' and workers' groups continued to oppose the regime, albeit indirectly; attempts were made to revitalise the Muslim Brotherhood and recruit younger members; and within the official youth organisation were young people accused of being Maoists, and subsequently imprisoned.

Nasser's policies, however, did not only affect the cadres of the youth organisations and student unions, both the loyalists and those who chose to speak out and pay the price. As a vacuum of independent and pluralistic political activism was created, most students and young graduates became apathetic — a logical stance given the fact that they were only required to support the regime and agree to their leaders' decisions. This generation's energy was transferred from political activism to the safer arena of sports, and this period witnessed the phenomenal rise of the Ahli and Zamalek clubs, allegiance to which divided the country as no other issue could.

The defeat had an especially strong impact on young people, whether on the rebellious minority that grew increasingly outspoken and courageous following the defeat, or the majority that was rudely awakened. The defeat served as a catalyst which allowed previously taboo questions to be broached and encouraged the timid to make their demands assertively. Young people served as a fuse, not only in the sense that their frustration and the shock caused by the defeat was to lead to an explosion, but because the need to "reverse the effects" of the defeat was fulfilled at huge cost — a price they paid in kind. It was only fair, therefore, that they carry out the cost-benefit analysis which would determine whether or not the outcome would be worth the sacrifices they had to make, and call for radical changes, not only on the external front but on the domestic scene as well.

While those who served in the army threw all their energy into the 1973 War, and hence were able to compensate for 1967, those who did not had to find another outlet: the students and workers' demonstrations that took place after June 1967 and before October 1973. Opposition to Nasser and Sadat was not expressed in similar terms: the generation which came of age under Sadat either opposed the new regime violently, or supported it enthusiastically as players in the open market or migrants across the open borders.

Immediately following the 1967 defeat, outrage was expressed spontaneously, but in the next weeks students discussed its dimensions and implications everywhere, in schools and on the streets. A new awareness developed, and the rebellion crystallised in the workers' and students' uprisings of February and November 1968.

The desire to transcend the regime's shortcomings as well as its ideological and political hegemony was clear in the support manifested for it on 9 and 10 June, and the rebellions of the next year. But this transformation was not complete until Sadat's accession to power. The 1967 generation was directly affected by the changes of this period, which included the opportunity to travel which few had enjoyed previously. The active cadres, on the other hand, were most affected by the admission that the official youth organisation had failed, and its ultimate removal from the political structure as a whole, as well as the relaxation of administrative control over the student unions.

The October War gave Sadat new political legitimacy and marked a break with the system of reference rooted in the 1952 Revolution. The student uprisings of January 1972 and 1972-1973 were not just reactions to the 1967 defeat, but the culmination of continuous pressure to declare war and liberate occupied land. Neither as the "generation of the revolution", that received free education, nor as the "generation of 1967", that was able to redress military failure through civilian activism, did they share in the fruits of their victories.

Therefore, the system remained static. The state continued to view these groups as threats to state security. For their part, the young activists continued to doubt the regime's credibility and the significance of the war into which it ventured, as well as the essence of the peace that followed. They also had doubts about economic liberalisation policy, and the degree of democracy allowed. In this way, the active students — particularly the leftists — remained in conflict with the system within the university context until their last battle before the Islamist takeover on campuses throughout the country: the bread riots of January 1977.

The 1967 generation eventually disintegrated. At the top, a lack of confidence in the political system led to the adoption of other ideologies. Some turned to Marxism, others to conservative Islamist thought. Others still remained loyal to Nasserist ideology, especially under Sadat.

Other splits occurred: between the younger, more radical trends and the older generation, which had believed in the same slogans since the '40s, or between those who sought work abroad and those who found employment in government offices. Some made money and benefited from spreading corruption, others barely survived. Some continued to believe in radical change, while others were mired down in apathy. But even the radicals had no clearly defined project. Their opposition to the turn events had taken was deeply felt, but the path to take remained invisible. At most, they aroused empathy; but few believed in their capabilities as leaders.

A political movement which had developed on campus, and a history of opposition to the state, gave the activists of this generation little to build on. At best, their successors adopted their ideas and goals: the Islamic youth movement emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood, and the leftist youth movement followed the communists. The Nasserist and Wafdist experiences had their followers, too.

The generation of 1967 went through 30 years of upheavals and betrayals with their eyes wide open. Today, those who have survived are disillusioned. Thirty years after the war that gave birth to their generation, the young people who were defeated, yet rose again to challenge this defeat have weathered many crises; but their experiences have not provided them with sufficient credit to carry responsibility for the future.

As we enter a new century, they remain in limbo.

The writer is director of Al-Jeel Centre for Youth and Social Studies.

To The Editor

Discriminatory fees

Sir- I am an American citizen who has been living in Egypt for a year. I love life in Egypt, and it has become a second home for me. However, I am becoming increasingly frustrated with the sky-rocketing fees that are aimed exclusively at foreigners. First it was the doubling of entrance fees at tourist sites; now it is the doubling of train fares. I find it difficult to understand these prices — perhaps a ten per cent increase would be reasonable (or even a twenty-five per cent increase), but a doubling of prices is not only frustrating *for foreigners* but self-defeating for Egypt.

If Egypt continues to raise its prices in such an unreasonable manner, it will lose one of its main attractions for tourists: its inexpensiveness. This is the primary factor behind the lull in European tourism, and it will likewise begin to drive tourists away at a time when they should be most accommodated and welcomed.

The Mummy Room at the Egyptian Museum may sound intriguing, for example, but the entrance fee of LE40 quickly wipes away any sense of curiosity. The recent price increases have crossed the line between making a profit from foreign visitors and taking advantage of them, and tourists may begin to look for cheaper regional alternatives such as Turkey.

Not all foreigners are wealthy business tycoons with money to toss around; many of us even use public buses rather than taxis so as to save money. Egypt must recognise this fact and return to its roots as a haven for travellers on a budget. To ignore this is to invite Egypt into the mediocre ranks of countries that have lost tourists to their cheaper neighbours.

Kurt J Werthmueller
Cairo

Thugs alarm

Sir- Though any citizen is legally allowed a bodyguard, these are most often private thugs. Because this phenomenon was left unchallenged, a new type of thuggery has emerged. Large firms recruit unemployed or uneducated youngsters, to terrify their opponents and dictate their terms. This is corporate thuggery.

Unless these two practices are seriously dealt with, a third, maybe the most serious, type of gangster will emerge: the political thug. The opposition parties may hire thugs of all hues in order to stage demonstrations. But in the climax of any political fall-out or social unrest, these peaceful demonstrations will turn into hit-and-run battles with security forces. Then killing, pilferage, arson and sabotage will not be ruled out.

I am not talking theoretically or randomly. We are on the threshold of enforcing the new land law. Some opposition parties, along with their thugs, may incite tenant farmers to protest against the new law. If this occurs, the whole nation will be in danger.

Mahmoud Elewa
Victory College,
Maadi

Reflections By Hani Shukrallah — 'I am dying, Egypt'

Is it not over yet? The fat lady came, sang — albeit a maudlin "To Bibi with love" — and left. What on earth, then, are the Palestinians sticking around in that refuse heap called Oslo for? The Arab regimes, ever predictable, after much screeching and howling and warnings of dire consequences, resolved to do what any gambling, if "un-sporting", person could have safely bet — 10 to 1 — they would do, which is nothing.

Arafat, ensnared without hope of escape in the cleverest trap Israel has ever laid, and it has laid some goodies — most notably the one for Nasser in 1967 — reportedly collapsed from exhaustion and had to be carried out of the meeting hall, after a heated argument with the Qatari foreign minister, during this week's Arab League Council meeting in Cairo. The latter had no compunction about flaunting the resolutions of last year's Cairo Arab summit, which called for a freeze on the normalisation of ties with Israel, and insisting that Qatar had an "international obligation" to hold the Doha MENA IV Conference on schedule, next month.

The last "Arab card" proves to have been an illusion, and meanwhile the ghost of the "Jordanian option", hovering in the background, never talked about, but ever present, looms larger, as the tired old revolutionary-turned-bungling-statesman is slowly but surely driven to his death by 'friend' and foe alike.

Ironically, Rabin's reluctant and contemptuous recognition of the "terrorist" PLO, hailed by incurably optimistic Arab intellectuals as a major triumph, a historic compromise and a major retreat in the Zionist design of things — involving such high-sounding, highly fashionable, multiculturalist philosophy as "mutual acceptance, rather than negation, of the Other" — was, implicitly, a major step in the direction of the Hashemite Kingdom. And this not just because it opened the way for the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty, accompanied as it has been by a highly emotional "coming out of the closet" celebration of Israeli-Hashemite ties. I expect, however, that Oslo's designers saw this "Jordanian scenario" as a very definite "*potential*" outcome of the Oslo process, rather than its single purpose.

That purpose, after all, is clear and explicit. In recipe form, it goes something like this: Hitch Arafat and the PLO with the dirty business of "protecting Israeli security"; make any reduction in the occupation, or expansion of the trappings of self-rule, contingent upon the effectiveness and ferocity of that repression; grab as much land as you possibly can, for roads, byroads, settlers, military installations, "organic urban development"; keep the pressure up by starving the Palestinians in the self-rule areas; season to the taste of whoever happens to be in power in Israel; assassinate Hamas and Jihad leaders, with the sure knowledge of "terrorist" reprisals; launch the odd butchery operation in south Lebanon; open a tunnel beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque, let the zealots and settlers run riot in Palestinian land, tut-tutting more or less mildly, depending on whether you're Labour or Likud; maintain "the process" for as long as you can — American envoys are especially favoured for this purpose — and, all the while, keep raising the heat on "the security issue". Garnish and eat when ready.

The essence of Oslo, I have argued several times before, is in the process rather than the text, and a fundamental dynamic of that process is the erosion of Palestinian political power which, for an oppressed and subjugated nation, can lie only in the level of political mobilisation and organisation of the people, their unity of purpose, clarity of direction and fighting morale, all of which are expressed in a dynamic and healthy interaction between grass-roots activism and organisation, on one hand, and a truly representative national leadership, on the other.

Unbiased reports from the Palestinian territories seem to reveal that in the mere four years since the signing of Oslo's Declaration of Principles, the three years since "the transfer of powers" to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho, the two years since the "redeployment" of Israeli troops from West Bank cities, and the year that has passed since the election of the Palestinian Council, followed by the farcical "redeployment" in Hebron, this process of erosion has gone a very long way towards completion.

It remains to be seen whether "*Exeunt* Arafat and *retinue*; the King *enters*" is a likely ending to this sordid chapter of Palestinian history.



Shattered, battered and bereft

David Blake watches a world burn

Tchaikovsky

Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Master Symphony II; Brigitte Engelhard, piano; Ahmed El-Saedi, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House, 20 September

This concert like an Indian pagoda opened on fine, slim legs, with the little *Haffner symphony 15 in D major K385* of Mozart, then moved into glamorous nights with De Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* — and ended without warning, transmogrified into the huge body of the *Manfred* music of Tchaikovsky, opus 58.

The pagoda, though strained, held the course. The small *Haffner* symphony does not even belie its size — small is beautiful in this case. And so the proud, haughty thing moved through its world of crackle and shine like a little monarch. Beware the smile — ageless, timeless and maybe toothless as it is, if thwarted, the bite can be lethal.

The *Haffner* is a practiced occupant of its Hall of Mirrors: true politesse can kill. The Cairo Symphony, enjoying high, stylish days, hustled it along. The four small movements differed one from another, but somehow showed they belong to the same body. Birth does tell sometimes, especially if both your parents are Mozart.

The first movement went along like a power vehicle, plumes flying, clean and perfectly groomed. The second movement, called an *andante*, a handshake too hard for love, but brief anyway, was a dismissal: good-bye, try again sometime. By the third movement, it seemed as though the sound set in the first was to remain till the end, very professional, gilded and burnished. In the midst of its shape, a song suddenly wafts out, operatic, nostalgic, but formal, a hint of autumnal warmth. Simple, and its lack of affectation shows the perfect school of Mozart.

The strings throughout showed variety and went as light as airflow. This *Haffner* had what they call *du chien*, a cool, highly bred little beast.

Then De Falla — *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*. In 1914 De Falla wrote an opera, *Vida Breve*. It was a great success. It brought flamenco Spain to the northern theatre, and a first whiff of what was to come later. Then the world dropped to pieces in 1914, and De Falla had to start again when the destruction stopped. The Russian ballet gave *El Amor Brujo* and *The Three-Cornered Hat*, and once again De Falla was a hit. In 1915, in the middle of the chaos, De Falla, a good pianist himself, wrote *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*. The piece became pop before pop. Everyone, even Rubenstein, played it. It was a prepacked concerto: all the glamour, but not much hard work. Pop or not, it is a lovely thing, and Spain is there inside it.

The performance of this night was certainly somebody's Spain — nights in gardens, but not De Falla's. More Ravel — soft and milky. It was not the fault of the orchestra which accompanied the pianist Brigitte Engelhard who came from Salzburg. The band did well, with hints of flint coming through the evening night.

Engelhard's touch and tone do not travel — not South anyway. She has all the technique, but not apparently the feeling for what she was playing. Hers is not the de Larrocha way. The piano should stamp, the rhythm should be sharper and the tone, dusky. She never brought the gardens out of the night or evoked the shadows of the pines with midnight blue Mediterranean showing through. No guitar, she lost her first wave of *glissandi*, but found the second too late. It was gentle, *douce*, but never thrilling. The Spanish night never came.

The event of the concert — in fact it was the concert — was the *Manfred* music of Tchaikovsky. This was given by El-Saedi and the Cairo Symphony Orchestra last year and proved the event of the season. They have brought it off again in even better form than last year.

But be warned, the *Manfred* is one of the longest listens in music. You can survive the *Manfred*, but you must be as tough as Tchaikovsky to do it. It takes hours. It seems like hundreds of years. It is not a symphony. It has no name in Tchaikovsky's *oeuvre* except *Manfred*. It is a happening like an air crash, like Russia itself. It is a late work. The Tchaikovsky life went along out of recorded time. How did one visit to the planet provide enough time for all this living, working and dying? The *Manfred* is like a conversation with the Emperor Tiberius. Asked "Do you remember?...", Tiberius interrupted: "I remember nothing. After me, let the world burn."

The world in 1885 was burning around Tchaikovsky. He was having trouble with his six — or were they 60? — famous brothers; his muse and patroness, the vulturine millionairess Nadezhda Von Mek, had evaporated; unhappily, his unfortunate wife had not. She was clinging to his fame like a media queen. All that lead on his back. The tumour around was growing.

Manfred was the result of this time. It came into being because his friend the composer Glazunov suggested that Tchaikovsky write a work inspired by Byron's *Manfred*. Tchaikovsky liked it, then dropped it, and then began again. It has become a fantastic thing, a nightmare about a dream. Berlioz had done this with his *Symphonie Fantastic*. Tchaikovsky turned Byron's *Manfred* into an autobiography: a tale of crazy fury, love, lust, demons and the wicked world — and orgies and redemption to finish with.

Tchaikovsky is so big you can dislike parts of him and love the rest. At least *Manfred* lacks self-pity which oozes through the symphonies, rhetoric which waits around at the end of every sentence, ejaculations which occur in most phrases of the symphonic works. Instead, we have in the *Manfred* cool observation, self-mockery, fear but no terror, and a breathtaking rush to the finish before the poison phials get too numerous.

Manfred is tough, opening in huge blocks of sound. Then, there is a wedding on the journey: a lovely bride in a gloatingly bright white dress which catches fire. She is burned away into heavenly golden drops of music which sing the song of past bliss which never, for Tchaikovsky, occurred. A spider's web grows out of dissonant note clusters, weaving the entire thing into a sleazy mass of irresistible tunes which threaten to strangle the entire work. The listener is nowhere. Arrogant and fearless, the music careers on, but it is not self-indulgent. Tchaikovsky has changed his tune and his plan.

Mahler said that in all big works there is one point, and one only, in which to release the great eruption. All through this work the care and attention that was being given by orchestra and maestro was made clear. Strings sang, the brass always in tune, and the winds played up in the heights Tchaikovsky has given to them. Yet always the question lurks: when? When will it come, the crash, the inevitable pay off of such behaviour? Heroes lost to a world they fail to deal with usually destroy themselves. Tchaikovsky knew all the answers. He jumps off the cliff into the tumult below, leaving the work and the listener to fend for themselves.

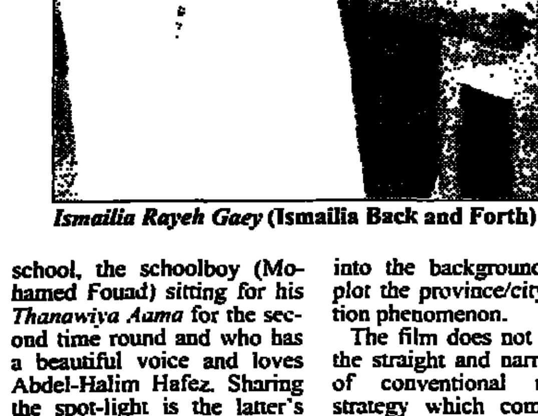
So came Mahler's moment of truth — and El-Saedi grabbed it. No warning. Everything tumbled into the *fuoco*, the fury. Great gashes tear up the fabric as the lot — we, El-Saedi, the work — are thrown into the air by shimmering arcs of harp *glissandi*. Up or down, it is the same awful end of *Manfred* which seems to slide out of reach. Suddenly the scene clears entirely. The apocalypse is over. We are refreshed and set free.

Better to read Donne's sermons before hearing the *Manfred*. One illumines the other.

Cinema

Out of the frying pan

Khairiya El-Beshlawi drives through *Ismailia Rayeh Gaey* and has a bland, quick bite



Ismailia Rayeh Gaey (Ismailia Back and Forth)

It is ironic that, in terms of box-office returns, a film like Karim Dia'eddin's *Ismailia Rayeh Gaey* (Ismailia Back and Forth) should be more successful than Youssef Chahine's *Al-Massir* (Destiny). The overwhelming popularity of the film — lacking as it does stars, a substantial production budget, a distinguished director — raises for the critic all kinds of interesting questions.

The film, scripted by Ahmed El-Bey, boils over with ingredients guaranteed to tickle the palate of the average viewer, enabling him to escape to a world of impossible dreams which the film nonetheless suggests can come true. Among other ingredients of the stew, there is the popular blend of racy humour, a couple of songs, a homespun story, a little romance, a large dose of sincerity, a touch of neighbourly values, a sprinkling of traditional values: nobility, chivalry and industriousness. All these ingredients gel to form a plot set in a down-to-earth working-class neighbourhood, the kind that breeds "good people", who endure their daily trials and tribulations with a smile and a song.

And who holds centre-stage in this neighbourhood? Who else but a small, middle-class family consisting of head of household Salim El-Masri (Hamdi Gheith) the retired government employee, his wife (played by Karima Mukhtar), the mother of the four children: the soldier who went off to fight in 1967 and never returned, the carpenter (Hassan Ibrahim) who, to all intents and purposes, is the bread-winner of the family, the mechanic (Khaled El-Nabawi) who never went to school, the schoolboy (Mohamed Fouad) sitting for his *Thanawiya Aama* for the second time round and who has a beautiful voice and loves Abdel-Halim Hafez. Sharing the spot-light is the latter's friend (Mohamed Heneidi) who lives on the same street and is in the same class, as well as the neighbours' daughter Salwa (Hanan Tork), one of the two love-interests in the film.

Even a cursory viewing shows a film begging to be interpreted allegorically. The place: a typical Egyptian alley, with its host of mechanic's shops, barbers and schools. The time: immediately after 1967. The protagonists: an average sized family, the head of whose household answers to the name Salim (meaning, Peaceable) El-Masri (meaning, The Egyptian) and whose martyred son bears the name Gamal. Indeed, one need not be a film critic to see that this family is meant to represent a microcosm of middle-Egypt. If there is any doubt that the family is meant to be representative, the authors throw into the background of the plot the province/city migration phenomenon.

The film does not veer off the straight and narrow path of conventional narrative strategy which commercial, comic films of its ilk have already trod. The concoction is familiar enough: gags, more gags, songs, witty repartee, all carried off by a consummate comedian. Mohamed Heneidi, the clown in this film, is given full rein to entertain in a series of stock-comic situations: squabbles with the barber and the teacher, cheating during exams, poking fun at his mother's snoring and grotesque features.

By succeeding only too well in holding up teachers and mothers for laughter, the film which elsewhere melodramatically asserts traditional values, ends up subverting the very educational mores and sacred family structures that underpin it. *Ismailia Rayeh Gaey* does not merely portray the devaluation of values that is plaguing our times, but also, and more pernicious still, glamorises this sorry state of affairs.

That there is an autobiographical parallelism between Mohamed Fouad and the character he plays, notably in the dramatic turns of their fortunes, is beside the point. What is striking is that this particular rags-to-riches fairy tale is made possible thanks not only to good old fashioned lucky strokes, but also to cheating in exams. The film seems to say cheating is okay if you share the booty with members of your family and a few neighbours. The lucky, idle schoolboy becomes a super-star, a rich super-star with a villa overlooking the Nile. He does not hesitate to buy a car for his mechanic brother, a fully equipped flat for his carpenter brother who can now finally afford to marry his sweetheart and, to top it all, to share the booty with his best friend and his beloved. A quick and easy (and attractive) success story without sweat or tears, one that never considers the time-hallowed adage that the sins of the fathers are visited on the sons.

The film wants to have its 1960s cake and eat it in 1990s fashion, too. The family might have become filthy rich, but it is still typical respectable middle-class Egyptian at heart — happy, loving, co-operative, always ready to lend a helpful hand to the less fortunate members of the tribe, all with a song thrown in for good measure. And what songs they are — 1990s popular, of course, but trying at the same time to borrow some moral credibility from the very same past (the 1960s) that the film satirises.

The film is riddled to the core with self-contradictions. Why, for example, make fun of such patriotic songs like *Ragein* (We Shall Return) and *Khalli El-Silah Sahi* (Keep the Weapons Raised and Ready) when there is a martyr in the family and his photo in military uniform is deemed important enough to be brought to our attention?

Yet, in spite of these many discordant elements, there is some warmth in the characterisation and the portrayal of human relationships. It has to be acknowledged that this light concoction can go some way to keeping the wolf at the door, even if it might cause indigestion. In short, this film is like popular fast-food — tasty, cheap to prepare and quickly over and done with.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Assala Association for Contemporary and Folkloric Arts
Exhibition Hall, Al-Ahram Building, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 5786100. Daily 9am-10pm.

Mina Sarofim (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, corner of Montaza St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 27 Sept.

Indian Contemporary Art
El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 29 Sept.

Children's Exhibition
Salama Gallery, 36-A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 30 Sept.

Group Show
Donia Gallery, 20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Doctors' Tower, 4th floor, Bab El-Louq. Tel 355 8367. Daily 12pm-10pm. Until 30 Sept.
Works by Hamed Nada, Adham Wanli, Hosni El-Banani, Seif Wanli, Fatma Rifaat, Mohamed Nagui and Zakaria El-Zeini, among others.

Group Exhibition
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Sheikh El-Marsafi, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Opening 13 Sept 7pm. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-12pm & 6pm-8pm. Until 30 Sept.
Inspired by Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, Irina Ionesco, Pino Chimenti, Angelo Canevari and Amal Mastouk exhibit photographs, mixed media works, sculptures, and paintings, respectively, under the title Women, Knights, Weapons and Love Stories.

Summer Collection
Khan El-Maghrabi Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Fri, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-10pm. Until 30 Sept.
Works by Tahiya Halim, Abdel-Wahab Morsi, Salem Salah, George Bahgori, Hassan Abdel-Fattah, among others.

Group Exhibition
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 5pm-10pm. Until 30 Sept.
Works by over 20 artists, including George Bahgori, Mohamed Abla, Salah Hassouna, Xavier Puigmarti, Esmat Dawistashi and Aziz El-Hihi.

Erhard Wehrmann
Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, noon-8pm. Until 3 Oct.
Black and white photographs under the title Artist Portraits, taken between 1962 and 1995 of Alberto Giocometti, Wilfredo Lam, Ossip Zadkine, Henry Moore and Kumi Sugai, among others.

Adly Rizkallah (Watercolours)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, corner of Montazah, Zamalek. Opening: 7pm. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. 1-16 Oct. Meeting with the artist 4 Oct, 7pm.

Sobhi Guirguis (Sculpture)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Opening 23 Sept, 7pm. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6pm-9pm. Until 17 October.

Suzanne Mubarak Children's Museum
34 Abu Bakr El-Seddiq St, Heliopolis. Tel 249 9915. Daily exc Mon, 9am-2pm

FILMS

Spanish Films
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Adly St, Kodak passage, Downtown. Tel 395 2526
25 Sept, 9pm: Las Cosas Del Querer (1991), directed by Jaime Chavarri, starring Angela Molina and Antonio Banderas.
30 Sept, 9pm: Dias Contados (1994), directed by Imanol Uribe.
1 Oct, 9pm: El Dia De La Bestia (1995), directed by Alex de la Iglesia.

Building For the Future: The Seto Ohashi Bridges
Japanese Information and Culture Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. 25 Sept, 6pm.

French Films
French Cultural Centre, 1 Madrasat El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679.
25 Sept, 8pm: No Smoking, directed by Alain Resnais.
French Cultural Centre annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824.
28 Sept, 7pm: Trois Hommes A Abattre, directed by Jacques Deray.

Russian Films
Pushkin Centre for Russian Culture, 127 El-Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 360 6371.
Russian and Egyptian film screenings every Monday at 7pm.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

The Lost World
El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm & 6.30pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9pm.
Steven Spielberg's sequel to Jurassic Park promises more spine-chilling dinosaur chases.

Volcano
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm; Thur-Sat midnight show.
Following the tradition of natural disasters, is a huge production starring Tommy Lee Jones

The Saint
MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
With Val Kilmer and Elisabeth Shue.

Double Team
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 592 4830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman and Mickey Rourke.

The Devil's Own
Odeon III, Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Brad Pitt and Harrison Ford.

Ismailiya Rayeh Gaey (Ismailiya Back and Forth)
Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Odeon II, Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.
With Hanan Tork, Khaled El-Nabawi, Mohamed Heneidi and singer Mohamed Fouad.

El-Mar'a Wel-Satour (The Woman and the Cleaver)
Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9.pm.
Nabila Ebeid's latest venture involves *the hacking to pieces of men.*

Children's Exhibition

El-Masir (Le Destin)
Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 591 6095. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Odeon I, Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797.
Youssef Chahine's latest mega-production, starring Nour El-Sherif, Leila Elwi, Mahmoud Hemeida, Safeiya El-Emari and a large, young, aesthetically pleasing cast.

DANCE

Prague Festival Ballet
Gomhouriya Theatre, 12 Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 25 Sept, 9pm.

Kim Bock Hee Contemporary Dance Company
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 29-30 Sept, 9pm.

MUSIC

National Arabic Music Ensemble
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 25 Sept, 9pm.
Conducted by Selim Sahab.

Song Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 25 Sept, 9pm.
Spanish musical compositions performed by soloists Iman Moustafa, Walid Korayem, Hossam Mostafa and Hala El-Shaboury.

Cairo Opera Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 26 Sept, 2pm.
Compositions by Tchaikovsky and Dvorak, conducted by Mostafa Nagui.

Opera Gala I
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 27 Sept, 9pm.
The Cairo Symphony Orchestra performs selections from Rossini, Offenbach, Lehar and Rimsky-Korsakov, with soloists Brigida Bzinkiewic (soprano) and Carlos Montane (tenor), conducted by Ahmed El-Saedi.

Piano Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 27 Sept, 9pm.
Performed by Ilina Dzamachivilli.

Cairo Opera String Quartet
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 28 Sept, 9pm.

Sajaya
Garden of the Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 [illegible] St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. 25 Sept, 9pm.
Georges Kazazian's latest compositions performed by himself on the oud with Nagib Abdel-Hamid [illegible] and Alain Robert (tabla).

Piano Concert
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 30 Sept, 8pm.
Professor Nihal Mourad performs selections from Scarlatti, Haydn, Schumann, Brahms and Gamal Abdel-Rehim.

El-Aswar Ensemble
French Cultural Centre, 1 Madrasat El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. 30 Sept, 8pm.

Don Pasquale
Ewart Hall, American University in Cairo, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6935. 30 Sept, 1 & 3 Oct, 8pm.
Gaetano Donizetti's comic opera in three acts will be performed in English by the Aldenton Chamber Opera Company.

THEATRE

Waiting for Godot
Wallace Theatre, American University in Cairo, Youssef El-Guindi St. Tel 357 6373. 25-30 Sept, 8pm.
Samuel Beckett's tragicomedy will be performed by the Theatre Group of the AUC, directed by Teri Harung-Smith.

Bahlool Fi Istanbul
Hilton Ramsis Theatre, Hilton Ramsis annex, El-Galaa St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Fri, 8.30pm.
With Samir Ghanem, Elham Shahin and Bothayna Rashwan.

Mama America
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, Qasr El-Nil St. Tel 575 0761. Sat & Sun 10pm; Mon 8pm.
Starring and directed by Mohamed Sobhi

'A'elat Wanis (Wanis' Family)
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, as above. Weds & Thurs, 10pm; Fri 8pm.
Directed by Mohamed Sobhi and starring all the family members of the televised series.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 10pm; Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
With Adel Imam, directed by Sherif Arafa.

Balls (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Nasr City. Tel 402 0804. Daily 10pm, Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
A large crowd including Mahmoud El-Guindi, Salah El-Saadani, Samah Anwar and Ashraf Abdel-Baqi and a contingent of Russian ballet dancers, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

Cromb, Zabadi (Cabbage, Yogurt)
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10pm; Mon & Fri, 8pm.
Sad Saleh, Ahmed Bedeir and legendary dancer Nagwa Fouad, directed by Essam El-Sayed.

Taraima II (Melody II)
El-Talia, Ataba Square, Downtown. Tel 937 948. Daily 10pm.
Directed by Entessar Abdel-Fattah.

Leila Foll (Jasmine Night)
Floating Theatre, Adjacent to University Bridge, Manial. Tel 364 9516. Daily exc Tues, 10pm.
Mahmoud El-Alfi directs Ola Rami, Emad Rashad, Mohamed Farid and singer Ahmed Ibrahim in a light musical.

Senouhi
National, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 9.30pm.
Scripted by Ahmed Fouad Selim and directed by Teymour Abasheika.

Ayam El-Insan El-Sab'a (The Seven Days of Man)
El-Ghouri Palace, El-Azhar, El-Hussein. Tel 511 0472. Daily 10pm.
Directed by Nasser Abdel-Moneim.

LECTURES

Activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Yemen
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 29 Sept, 7pm.
Lecture and slide projection by Dr Vittoria Buffa.

The Late Roman Period in Gaza (The Palestinian Authority), Recent Excavations
Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology in Cairo, 11 El-Mahalla St, Heliopolis. Tel 415 6278. 30 Sept, 6pm.
Lecture by Professor Wlodzimierz Godlewski, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw.

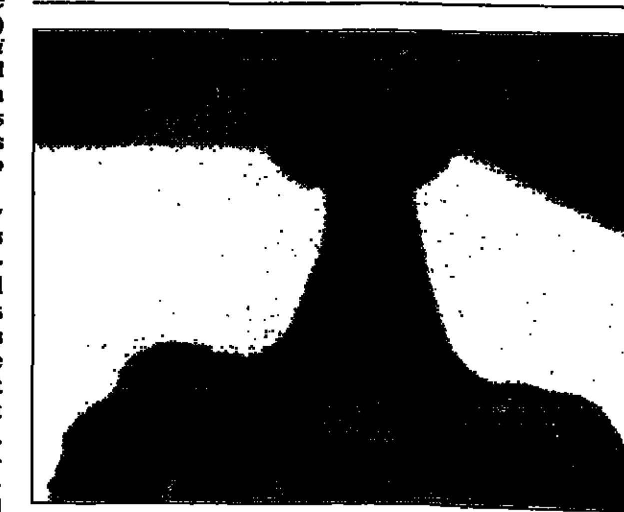
The Sociology of Egyptian Men-Western Women Marriages: History, Social Characteristics and Future
Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development Studies, *17 Street 12, Moqattam. Tel 506 1617. 30 Sept, 7pm.*
Lecture by Dr Said Sadek, specialist on Arab-Western marriages.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.

Please send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo.
Tel 5786064.
Fax 5786089-833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries



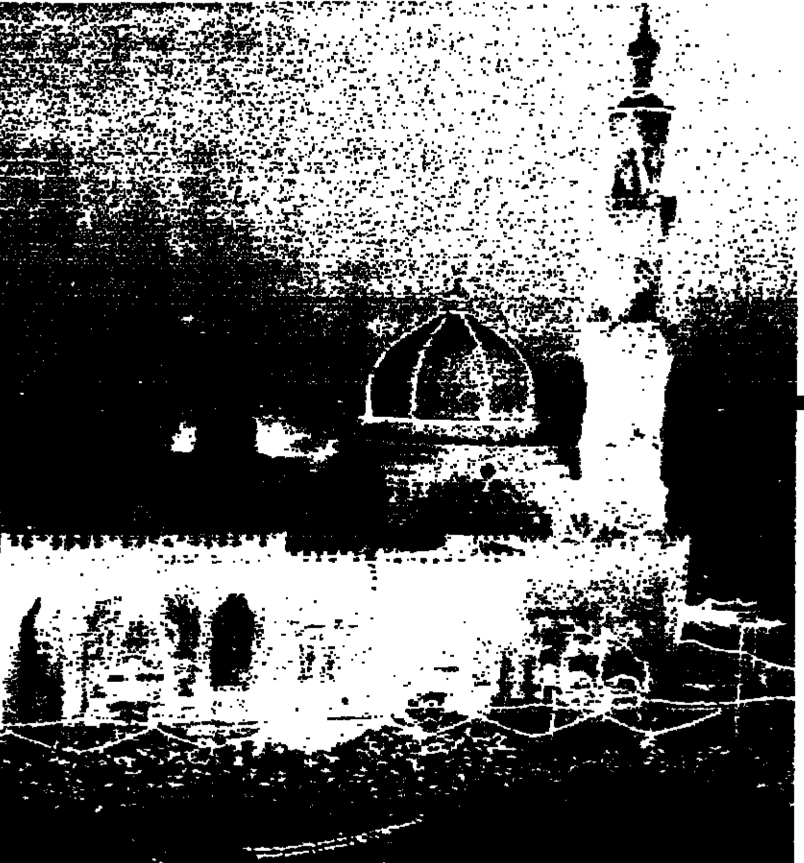
Mohamed Othman

TWENTY-SEVEN artists, members of Assala (Authenticity) Society for the Protection of Folkloric and Contemporary Art, exhibit their work in the foyer of the Al-Ahram Building. The exhibition includes paintings, sculptures, ceramics and photographs. Worth noting are: the painting by Ezz El-Din Naguib entitled The Sacrificial Feast, which is inspired by Pharaonic bass reliefs, the two ceramic column capitols by Ali Ibrahim, the bust entitled Egyptian Girl by Mohamed Othman and the installation — Pharaonic in inspiration, but modern in form — by Esmat Dawistashi.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**

Humane compromises

The Pure and Powerful: Studies in Contemporary Muslim Society, Nadia Abu-Zahra. Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997



"...visitors to the shrine of Al-Sayeda Zeinab think of her as *Umm Masr kullaha* (Mother of all Egypt)"

"*Ya Umm Hashim ya Sitt ya Tahera* (O Umm Hashim, O Lady, O Pure One), take care of us, give us a look." Every day people show their love for the House of the Prophet Muhammad by calling on his granddaughter, Al-Sayeda Zaynab, who was buried in Cairo, where she died in AH 61 (AD 681) not long after the battle of Karbala'. Seeking her love, support, and protection, women visitors distribute food in the courtyard, enter the shrine with their right foot, read the *Fatiha*, go down on their knees, and tell Al-Sayeda their problems. Often they knock on the wall of the shrine seeking permission to enter, kiss the threshold, wipe the railings with handkerchiefs soaked in tears, ululate, and lie on their backs as a sign of trust. "*Ya Umm al-Yatama ya Umm al-Masakin ya Umm el-'Awagiz*" (O Mother of the Orphans, O Mother of the Oppressed, O Mother of the Incapable), take away the unhappiness in our hearts. Their concerns are quintessentially human: marital difficulties, family quarrels, financial troubles, ill health, loneliness. More than anything else, visitors to the shrine of Al-Sayeda Zaynab think of her as *Umm Masr kullaha* (Mother of all Egypt).

In his book *Al-Fatawi* (1965), the late Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut, former mufti of Egypt, described these and other rituals performed at the shrines of the *Awleya'* (Muslim saints) — and rejected them as non-Islamic. Visits to the tombs of good Muslims are lawful for the purpose of invoking divine mercy on the souls of the dead, but the belief that people will get nearer to God by approaching the *Awleya'* is not. Yet, he added, those who light candles and circumambulate the tombs should not be judged harshly or accused of *shirk* (believing that God has associates); on the contrary, in most respects their behaviour indicates that they are sincere believers who "should be taught and guided rather than denounced as non-Muslims" (Shaltut, pp. 222-23, cited by Abu-Zahra, p. 106).

This tension lies at the heart of a new book by Egyptian anthropologist Nadia Abu-Zahra, *The Pure and Powerful: Studies in Contemporary Muslim Society*. Based upon fieldwork done in the late 1980s she examines the rituals performed at the shrine of Al-Sayeda Zaynab, the celebration of her *mawlid*, the views of the *'ulama*, the role of government Islamic institutions, and particularly the importance of the mosque for women, who have a special relationship with their patron saint.

Thanks to the generous cooperation of Sheikh Ibrahim Galhum, the Sheikh of Al-Sayeda Zaynab Mosque, and the guidance of the late Dr Abul-Wafa Al-Taftazani, former vice-president of Cairo University and supreme head of the Sufi orders, Abu-Zahra was able to compare the daily lives of visitors to the shrine with the *fatawi* issued in response to their practices and problems. Likewise, given her own deep knowledge of Islamic texts, which she learned, in part, from her father, the late Azharite scholar Sheikh Mohamed Abu-Zahra, the author successfully analyses the ways in which the Islamic tradition is integrated with indigenous culture so as to make an Egyptian institution of the rituals and rites surrounding the shrine. She both fills a gap in our knowledge of the Egyptian cult of saints and corrects misconceptions on the part of Western anthropologists who insist on making distinctions between "popular" and "official" Islam.

The study is fascinating in its details. Most of the women that Abu-Zahra interviewed came to the mosque seeking medical cures or some form of justice. Others had more particular problems. A woman from Shubra asked Sheikh Gulham for an amulet to keep her ten-year-old daughter from running away from home, which she did on a regular basis; as it turned out, however, the woman had been severely beating the girl. The sheikh's solution was the most humane possible: he told the woman to treat her daughter kindly, and reminded the girl to obey her mother, adding that she should come to him if the beatings continued. As for the amulet, it was refused; instead, he suggested buying a copy of the Qur'an. Sometimes Abu-Zahra watched petitioners symbolically sweeping the courtyard in order, they said, "to avert oppression by their enemies" (p. 173). Others would write their requests on little pieces of paper and lay them on the tomb in the hope that their prayers would be answered.

Sadly, a strikingly high proportion of the complaints had to do with loneliness and the loss of love. Many of the women in this survey were divorced; others were widows; others had grown children who had left home; still others were first wives in polygamous marriages. Clearly Al-Sayeda Zaynab "listened" to their problems, providing moral support and spiritual relief. At the same time informal groups gathered in the marble courtyard on a daily basis, making it a space for women where concerns were shared and advice freely given.

The problem in all this, as Abu-Zahra points out, is that it is difficult to reconcile many of these rituals with the textual tradition. *The Pure and Powerful* shows that the officials at the mosque, mostly Azhar graduates, even if they sometimes do not officially endorse the practice of seeking the intercession of saints, nonetheless apply their rulings in a humane, pragmatic and learned fashion to serve the needs of the communities in which they live and work. It is not an easy task. And not infrequently the sincere believers, whom Sheikh Shaltut argued "should be taught and guided rather than denounced," are more than a little stubborn. When, for example, the women guides appointed by the Ministry of *Awqaf* explain to visitors that kissing the threshold of the shrine is *haram*, they argue back, claiming that God accepts it. One cannot help but feel compassion both for the visitors and for the infinitely patient guides who must daily try to teach proper rituals to peasant women who insist on village customs based upon the evidence of their experiences and a hard-bitten common sense born of years labouring in the soil.

In addition to the lengthy description of life at the Mosque of Al-Sayeda Zaynab, Abu-Zahra includes in this work a comparative analysis of the rain rituals performed in Tunisia and Egypt, a discussion of contemporary anthropological theory in regards to Islamic societies, and a brief section on Ramadan and *Shamm El-Nessim* as they are celebrated in Cairo. Frankly, this last section will hold little interest for people who live in Cairo, but in the more theoretical chapters she raises some important questions about the anthropology of Muslim communities.

Above all else Abu-Zahra insists that research must begin with the theological assumptions that underlie customs and practices instead of with materialist assumptions about social structures. Away with Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Away with kinship, economics, and politics. The proper subject matter for the comparative study of Muslim societies is the integration of Islamic prescriptions into social actions and beliefs. She literally stands anthropology on its head. She wants to start with the texts and the world-view of the learned and work her way down to the indigenous rituals of the peasantry. The implications are marvelous. The particular should be replaced by the universal and the nominal by the real. What is needed is an Islamic paradigm for a quintessentially Western, relativist discipline.

But Abu-Zahra stops short, caught, perhaps, between her heart and her intellect, her Egyptian upbringing and her Western education. The book's title refers to the purity of the saints and their power in the eyes of those who visit their shrines and attend their *mawalid*, but in another sense the "pure and powerful" implies certain ideological and psychological tensions that are not easily overcome. Ultimately, although it will be of great interest to Egyptian readers, the book is aimed at the West. Like a well-placed dart.

Next time out, however, one hopes that the author will aim much higher. Like so many studies in history, literature, and the social sciences, this is a counter-attack, a refutation rather than a reformulation. Its objectives are limited, necessarily so because the struggle is being conducted on foreign soil. Instead of striving for a new, liberating paradigm, it seeks to adjust existing theories. Consequently, those under attack will respond in kind, that is, in their own terms, assailing Abu-Zahra for her loose methodology, her anecdotal data, and her romanticism, which is a shame, because she is really onto something here. She breaks down assumptions and stereotypes, deconstructs outmoded dichotomies, reveals the complexities of Muslim society, uncovers the intricate web of relations between various social groups, and begins, tentatively, to develop new analytical concepts. Here's hoping Abu-Zahra, emboldened, will take up the banner another day. Next time out, more pure, more powerful.

Reviewed by **David Blanks**

Plain Talk

I always pride myself on having made, in my own modest way, a few literary discoveries. For instance, I discovered a number of Penguins printed in Egypt. It was during the second world war when books could not be imported from England and, to meet the requirements of the troops, Penguin started bringing out their books here, especially poetry anthologies and collections of short-stories.

Recently, I made another discovery in the form of a magazine published in the US in both Arabic and English. It is called *Dahesh Voice*, a monthly which deals mostly with literary and artistic subjects. Beautifully printed, the magazine carries colour illustrations and has wide popularity among Arab Americans and students of Arabic at American Universities.

The Dahesh Heritage which publishes the magazine is called after its founder, the late Dr Dahesh. He was a unique personality, a cross between *litterateur* and philosopher, whose bold syncretic ideas made him the subject of much criticism. Dr Dahesh was an art collector and his large collection is displayed in a museum called after him in New York.

Going through *Dahesh Voice*, I was impressed by the standard of articles and contributions. I was specifically attracted to an essay by former Egyptian Minister of Culture Dr Tharwat Okasha on art and life. Here, Dr Okasha gives what he describes as "quick features of... human creativity, both from the theoretical and practical points of view." He believes that art transcends cultural and temporal barriers, for who today is not moved by the bust of Nefertiti, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, or the Greek tragedies?

In the discursive style that is the hallmark of his writing, Dr Okasha maintains that the technological advancement we are witnessing as the millennium draws to a close has not, and indeed cannot, replace man's craving for beauty and art. He goes on to discuss the role of the art historian, the development of taste, the role of the artist vis-à-vis society, and other such key-issues.

Another article I found very stimulating was by George Nicolas Al-Hage on William Blake and Khalil Gibran, Poets of Prophetic Vision. For Blake and Gibran, as for other Romantics, Al-Hage argues, imagination "is part of the Romantics' faith in the individual self." Blake and Gibran, adds Al-Hage, developed in their mature years, as opposed, one may add, to precocious poets like Keats and Shelley. Yet, both Blake and Gibran displayed the artistic temperament since childhood, seeing visions and exhibiting a talent for drawing which they later developed to perfection.

The issues of *Dahesh Voice* I have received contain poems written by Dr Dahesh himself. The poems betray the influence of mythology, particularly of myths associated with Astrate to whom Dr Dahesh devoted an entire book. In one of the issues of the magazine, Dr Dahesh writes "my heart throbs with the love of beauty; and he who understands the mystery of beauty has made great strides into understanding the mystery of eternity."

Mursi Saad El-Din

Transmission and translation

Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo, Homa Hoodfar. California: University of California Press, 1997

The main point which sets this work apart from the recent crop of anthropological studies on Egypt's "popular quarters", working and peasant classes, women (veiled and unveiled, circumcised or not), — in other words, the underprivileged, the voiceless, or the working poor — is the fact that the author is an Iranian Muslim woman.

Hoodfar herself, initially wary that her research would be hampered by this fact — that "the very people I wanted to meet and make friends with [would] ask me what a young Muslim woman was doing traveling around the world by herself" (p 22) — soon discovered that her identity worked to her advantage in many instances, and that her informants accepted her presence and questions willingly. Is this, then, a specimen of that rare breed, an anthropological study both from within and without? Arab women, Muslims or Copts, have studied their own — *Arab Women in the Field* brings together good examples of this kind of work, which aims to combine the insights of insiders with the awareness afforded by a (Western) academic training. But the new breed of anthropologist — the *pantheon* includes such writers as Early, MacLeod, Singerman or Rugh — includes few Third World writers interested in other Third World societies. The exceptions are usually those social scientists who, armed with degrees from Western institutions, return to study their own third worlds, using the methodologies they learned abroad.

A promising start, therefore, in more ways than one: the writer's main interest is to explode the myths of passivity, fatalism and the acceptance of authoritarian-patriarchal traditional ideology among poor communities in Cairo. These stereotypes include women's acceptance of arranged marriages, polygyny, veiling, staying at home (as opposed to going out to work), male control of household finances, and the reduction of their role to bearing and raising children. It is true that apparent subordination to patterns of male domination is confusing when contrasted with women's very real (and still insufficiently documented) contribution to the survival of the family, household income, decision-making and the labour force. Hoodfar, however, like Diane Singerman (*Avenues of Participation*, the American University in Cairo Press, 1997), is post-feminist in that, while aware of the reality of women's oppression, she seeks to contextualise it. She turns her attention to both men and women: how they cope ("survival strategies", in the jargon), relate and live, how much work they really do, why they choose to educate their children or send them to work, who they marry, when, and why, and whether their behaviour and beliefs actually constitute the promotion or subversion of dominant discourse. Hoodfar broaches marriage, the family and the household; men, women and employment; household budgeting; consumption patterns; social networks; and sexual politics.

These are questions that must be asked, issues that must be investigated, and they are providing fodder for a plethora of monographs and theses. But all too often — Hoodfar herself is, at times, no exception — the stereotypes are not smashed but merely turned this way and that, examined from different perspectives, and replaced. The conclusion, almost invariably, is that people have good reasons for acting the way they do. This is only a partial victory over the type of Orientalist cliché-mongering that presented "characteristics of Third World peoples" as natural, immutable and pre-determined. The veneer of objectivity has been scraped away in many places, but the insertion of the researcher into the field has not been an easy process: the idea of an observer-participant remains a convenient gloss, as does the notion of specificity. While ahistoricism has often given way to contextualisation, the broad conclusions have remained the same: poor people are indeed fatalistic (for example), but this is only logical in their situation, given that many circumstances are indeed beyond their control.

It is this perspective that guides many of Hoodfar's findings: women do uphold the traditional ideology of men as the primary bread-winners, but they do so because it is to their advantage: most women, if given a choice, would not work, because they do not earn enough to justify neglecting their children and domestic responsibilities, while those who do are exploited by their husbands; women prefer arranged marriages, because their families' influence allows them to secure favourable terms and improves their chances of a successful marital relationship. These are comprehensible, logical statements, if a little unsettling in the wake of years of feminism during which women's right to go out to work, the need for this work to be recognised, and the importance of equality, were front lines in the struggle to dismantle patriarchy. To read that, in fact, traditional or conservative ideology emphasising women's domestic duties does make sense at the household level in a context of unemployment and inflation or political repression, is something of a shock.

Child labour is seen in the same context, as Hoodfar's informants, having realised that education no longer carries the prestige and guarantee of a job that it did during the Nasser era, are increasingly willing to apprentice their sons as mechanics or bakers from an early age. More shocking still is Hoodfar's finding that it is women, not men, who decide to circumcise their daughters. While feminists have traditionally presented female genital mutilation as yet another weapon in the arsenal of patriarchy, enabling men to control women's sexuality, Hoodfar asserts that women insist on circumcising their daughters precisely for the opposite reason: because they believe that uncircumcised women are cold and unresponsive to men as well as less fertile than their circumcised counterparts. While a Marxist feminist might label this false consciousness, or seek to understand how and why women internalise and defend an ideology that is clearly to their own detriment, Hoodfar shies away from the last step of analysis, taking refuge in the assertion that "unfortunately, neither the government nor its critics have used the legitimacy of Islam to discourage women from practicing female circumcision" (p 262).

This study is a strange bundle of contradictions. Ultimately, these are characteristic of the social sciences after Said's *Orientalism*. But in many respects, the wheel has come full circle. A single, fundamental question continues to plague research in these fields, and is perhaps most pressing for those who seek to carry off the delicate balancing act required of aware insiders. What must the source of our knowledge be? Must the Orient's discourse on itself be reproduced and "rationalised" — i.e. explained to the West (as Hoodfar has done)? This does away (if only for the moment) with the problem of the researcher's role, since it is thereby reduced to one of transmission or repetition. In other words, must a specific methodology be elaborated for the study of each specific community, rooted in its members' view of themselves? Or is a process of translation and interpretation into universal categories necessary if a more humanitarian way of knowing others is to be attained? Until this question is resolved, the same questions will be asked, and the same answers given. But this is, perhaps, not a bad thing. Stereotypes, if left intact, do serve a purpose. In his critique of Edward Said's seminal work, Sadeq Galal Al-Azm noted: "Concretely[...], Said warns American experts and their masters, those responsible for US policy, that, as long as they do not look at the Orient with new eyes, freed from the abstractions, generalisations and illusions borne by Orientalism, American interests in the Near East will continue to rest on quicksand. [...] In so doing, he forgets, or pretends to forget, that if the American experts and their masters follow his advice, the Orient will find in the United States an even more terrifying enemy than it is today." (cited in A. Roussillon, "Le Debat sur l'Orientalisme dans le Champ Intellectuel Arabe: l'Aporie des Sciences Sociales", *Peuples Méditerranéens*, Jan-March 1990)

Reviewed by **Pascale Ghazaleh**

From aesthetics to politics, and back again

Mahmoud El-Wardani reviews some of the more interesting titles to have appeared this month

•***Sihr Shanghai* (*Elembrujo de Shanghai*), Juan Marse, tr Ahmed Hassan. Cairo: published by the translator, 1997**
Ahmed Hassan is to be doubly lauded for his most recent publication: not only is his Arabic translation of the Spanish novel *Elembrujo de Shanghai* highly accomplished, it was published at his own expense. As for the author, Juan Marse, born in 1933, he ranks among the three top novelists in Spain today. The novel in hand received the Spanish Critics' Award for Best Novel in 1993, the year of its publication, as well as the 1994 European Literature Award, offered by the European Union. As Hassan points out, this novel is representative of Marse's fictional universe, dealing as it does with the ambience of Barcelona in the wake of the Civil War.

•***Tashkil Al-Azaa* (The Shaping of Harm), Maysoun Saqr. Cairo: Dar Sharqiyat, 1997**
This is the ninth poetry collection by Maysoun Saqr from the Emirates. An artist as well as a poet, Saqr's most recent poems are influenced by the plastic arts.

•***Awraq Sakandariya* (Alexandria Papers), Gamil Attiya Ibrahim. Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal, 1997**
Gamil Attiya Ibrahim's most recent novel has a broad thematic span, encompassing subjects as widely divergent as the 1919 Revolution and genetic engineering. A member of the '60s generation responsible for many innovations in Egyptian fiction, Ibrahim has been living in Switzerland for the past 18 years.

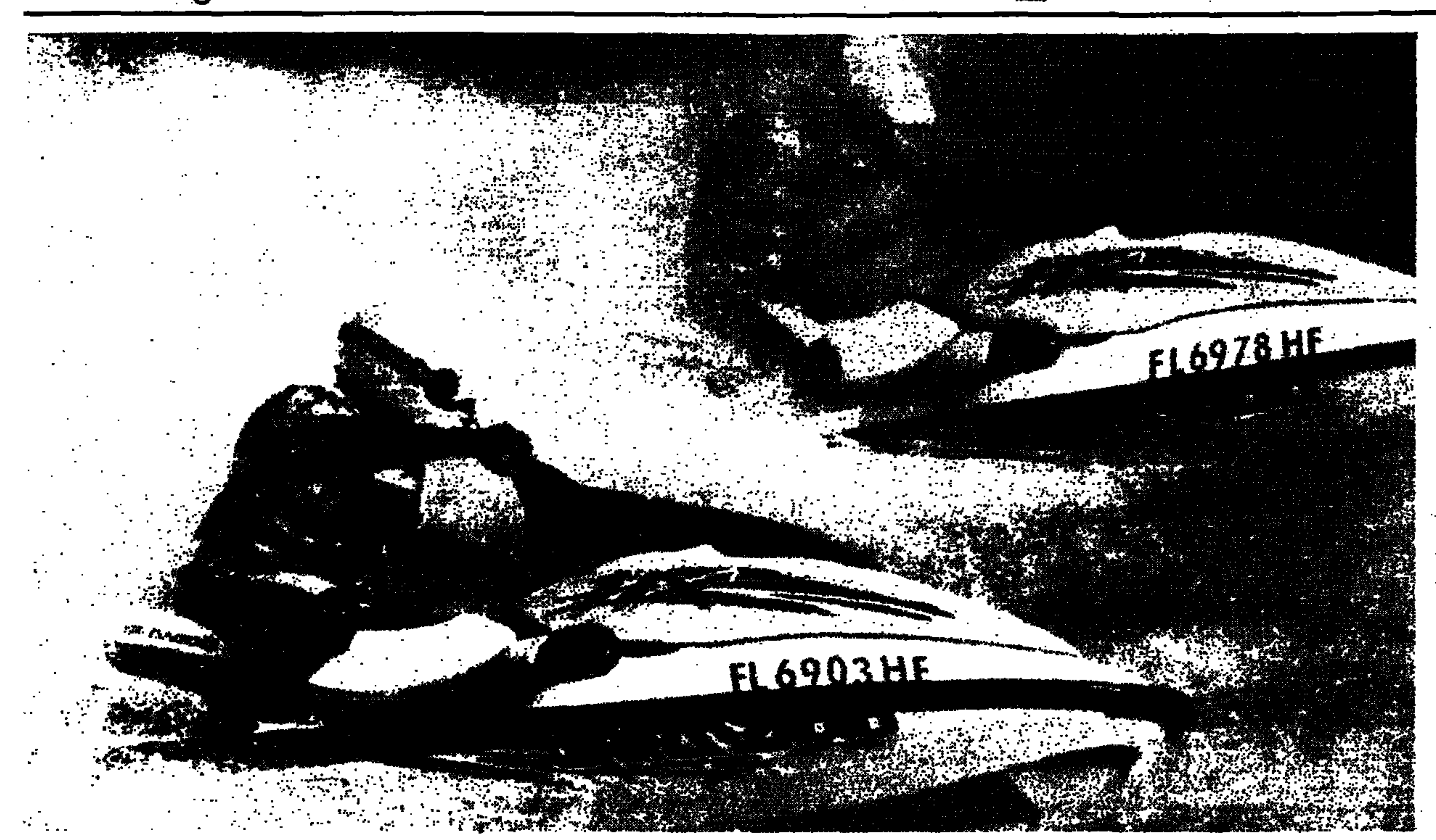
•***Al-Qissa, Al-Riwaya, Al-Mu'alif* (The Short Story, The Novel and the Author), ed & tr Khairi Doma. Cairo: Dar Sharqiyat, 1997**
Edited and translated by Khairi Doma, and revised by Sayed El-Bahrawi, the book in hand is a collection of seminal, theoretical essays on contemporary literary genres and post-modernism. The critics and theoreticians represented in this collection include Tezvetan Todorov, Lucien Goldmann, Ralph Cohen and Michel Foucault.

•***Arbioun 'Aaman Ala Al-Udwan: Port Said Ayam Al-Muqawama* (The Tripatrite Aggression Forty Years On: The Resistance Movement in Port Said), Kamal Al-Qalash. Cairo: Silsilat Kitab Al-Ahali, 1997**
Although the past year has witnessed a plethora of publications about the Suez War, marking its fortieth anniversary, Kamal El-Qalash's book has a freshness and immediacy that make it stand out. This has everything to do with the genesis of the book as narrated by El-Qalash in the introduction. In the early '60s, El-Qalash, like many intellectuals and leftists at the time, was a political prisoner in the infamous Oasis Prison, and it was there that he met Ibrahim Hagoug, one of the leaders of the popular resistance movement in Port Said. Over a period of several months, El-Qalash would interview Hagoug and take notes which he eventually managed to smuggle out of prison. It is these notes which form the core of this book.

•***Mamlakat Al-Aqtab Wal-Darawish* (The Kingdom of Sufi Figures and Dervishes), Arafa Abdou Ali. Cairo: Hai'at Qusour Al-Thaqafa, 1997**
In *The Kingdom of Sufi Figures and Dervishes*, Arafa Abdou Ali explores the cults, beliefs and rituals surrounding the *mawalid* and visits to tombs of Sufi figures. In addition to field work at the *mawalid*, the author's sources include the head of the Sufi orders as well as orientalist accounts.

•***Niqoush Ala Zaman* (Carvings on Time), Samir Gharib. Cairo: Maktabat Al-Usra, 1997**
In charting the history of the plastic arts in Egypt, Samir Gharib divides his material into three sections. The first section, entitled "Journey", is historiographic, dealing as it does with the pioneering role of Egyptian art historians in the early part of this century, such as Ahmed Youssef Ahmed, Mahmoud Khairat and Zaki Mohamed Hassan. In "A Study", the second section, Gharib reviews seminal art books published in Egypt in the first half of this century, and the way in which they helped formulate the artistic awareness and tastes of the first graduates of the Faculty of Fine Arts. In the final section, "Journalism", the author goes back to old magazines specialising in the plastic arts, such as *Al-Funoun* (Arts), to determine their attitude towards art.

•***Al-Sulta Al-Siyasiya Fi Masr Wa Qadiyat Al-Dimoqratiya* (Political Power in Egypt and the Question of Democracy), Ahmed Faris Abdel-Moneim. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1997**
In the present volume, Ahmed Faris Abdel-Moneim analyses the position of political powers, from Mohamed Ali to Mubarak, on the issue of democracy. He has divided the long period his book covers into six phases with telling labels: "the phase of political oppression", from 1805 to 1923; "the phase of formal political democracy", from 1923 to 1952; "the revolutionary transitional phase", from 1952 to 1956; "the phase of political oppression and social democracy", from 1956 to 1970; "the phase of political and social oppression", from 1970 to 1981. Abdel-Moneim then devotes a chapter to general features of the stance of the political powers on behavioural and constitutional aspects of democracy. The final chapter is on "the phase of democratic transition from 1981 to 1987".



Ride smart for the Red Sea?

Two years ago, the governor of the Red Sea decided to outlaw jet skis. Now, attempts are being made by investors and distributors in Hurghada to get around the ban, and play down the ecological and safety implications of the sport. Inas Mazhar investigates

During a regional conference on watercraft that recently brought the representatives of 16 nations together in Hurghada, Nahed El-Shazli, general manager of the Seadou company, felt the time had come to raise the vexed subject of jet skis once again.

"At the Marina resort at Alexandria, we impose strict rules on jet skis: the machines have to be registered and the owners and users have to have a licence, in order to guarantee the safety, not just of swimmers, but of the jet-skiers themselves as well," she said. "Anyone who breaks the rules is fined and an employee may well be fired if the offence is serious."

Why could the same system not be used in Hurghada as well? The answer, of course, is obvious. "The main difference is that this is the Red Sea, not the Mediterranean. The coral reefs and other environmental features will have to be taken into account." But El-Shazli argued that this obstacle should not create a taboo. "That's why we should take this opportunity to talk to the international distributors, to see what measures they have applied in other countries."

The Red Sea littoral is one of the world's most valuable, and most fragile, ecosystems, but El-Shazli's remarks have encouraged the governor of the province to form a committee to gather evidence about the environmental and safety experience of other countries. On the basis of the committee's recommendations, he may then decide to lift the ban.

One of the leading witnesses to appear before the committee *in the first days of its hearings* is Dany St-Pierre, director of marketing for a well-known US motor corporation. St-Pierre argues strongly that the manufacturing members of the Personal Watercraft Industry *Association (PWIA) are firmly committed to* the safe and responsible use of personal watercraft (PWC).

"The PWIA believes boating education, strong law enforcement, effective noise reduction, reasonable regulatory initiatives and conflict resolution are the keys to providing a safe and pleasant boating experience for the greatest number of people. Since its inception in 1987, the PWIA has been a willing and supportive partner to state and federal boating officials in the pursuit of safer and more responsible boating," St-Pierre said.

The PWIA strongly supports boating education for all boaters. Boating accidents are still overwhelmingly the result of inappropriate decisions made by boat operators. Ideally, boating education should start at school, so that safe and proper boating skills and water appreciation are developed early. This education should continue later with the successful completion of a formal boating course.

"An educated boater is a safe boater. And because safety is of paramount importance, the PWC industry is committed to providing purchasers and renters with quality materials to increase their knowledge of boating laws, and their sense of courtesy and responsibility," she said.

She added that her company, in conjunction with the US Coast Guard, has launched a nationwide safety education campaign throughout North America. The company is also providing dealers with safe operation reminders to be placed on every watercraft in their showrooms, and is sponsoring a national print media campaign highlighting safe behaviour in PWC enthusiast publications.

But can more responsible use solve all the problems which these expensive toys create? Swimmers and sunbathers often complain about the deafening noise made by jet skis. According to the PWIA, this is due to inappropriate patterns of use, such as operating *too close to a shoreline. This is one reason the* association endorses the so-called shoreline noise measurement laws, as laid down in the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Model Noise Law. It also supports the establishment of slow-speed/no-wake zones near shore for all boats, as noise conflict can also be due to the repetitive operation of any kind of powerboat if it takes place in a limited area.

For the PWIA, there is no problem that strong and effective law enforcement cannot solve. The way forward is to deal with the minority of boaters who do not obey the laws of the waterways.

"The resources devoted to on-water enforcement have become severely stressed over recent years. For example, while boating has grown significantly over the past 10 years, very few jurisdictions have increased their on-water law enforcement capability to match this growth," said St-Pierre.

"In fact, the opposite is more commonly the case. Jurisdictions have cut resources for on-water enforcement, even as they theoretically garner more revenue from boat registrations and taxes."

Aquatic acrobatics: who stands to lose the most from water sports?

The logic is impeccable — and extremely simple to execute. Increasing the number of marine patrols nationwide would result in safer boating. Almost every jurisdiction has laws on its statute books which, if enforced, would *greatly reduce accidents and conflicts.* Yet many agencies are already finding the enforcement of existing laws difficult due to reductions in resources. Passing more laws, only to see them poorly enforced, is not the solution.

What is needed, from the PWIA's perspective, is simply to balance the rights of the parties concerned. But their definition effectively excludes any concerns other than those of leisure use. PWC and other boat operators, swimmers, fishermen, paddle-sports enthusiasts, shoreline residents and visitors, all have something to say. But what about the rights of the sea itself?

Doesn't the distributors' insistence on the adequacy of existing legislation serve merely to distract attention from the lack of any appropriate environmental legislation, in the face of the damage that man's latest plaything might wreak? "Noise conflict" is not just a problem for human beings. It can easily shatter the precious living organism of a coral reef, undoing in months structures that took hundreds of years to create.

This omission did not escape the committee, who were quick to point out that most of the distributors had no experience outside the Mediterranean countries, where the marine environment is far less fragile than that of the Red Sea, and is also already substantially degraded. One environmental expert on the committee asked whether there were any examples of countries that were trying to deal with the same problem, and whose ecology was similar to that of the Hur*ghada region.*

The only such country that those present could suggest was Australia. The committee has therefore asked to consider evidence on the measures taken by Australia to protect its own marine ecology from the jet ski invasion, so as to gauge their effectiveness. Until there is convincing proof that it is possible to protect not just the interests of other users, but also the sea itself, the Red Sea ban on jet skis remains very firmly in place.



A day like any other

I woke up that Thursday and lay in bed for the few minutes it always takes to organise my thoughts and my day. The main event: lunch with Bernadette at 2.00. The main problem: a cow was scheduled to be slaughtered in celebration of the grand opening of yet another supermarket on our street. The animal was already tethered in the car park. I made a note to find out when exactly the sacrifice would take place in order to be away at that time. I have little sympathy for such barbaric practices. All in all, it was an ordinary day with small pleasures and just a few obstacles ahead.

My daughter and her husband gave me a ride downtown. It was around noon and I thought of the two leisurely hours that separated me from lunch. I may go to the hairdresser, I thought, or maybe... well, I had two free hours anyway. My daughter was going to university *to photocopy some papers;* I took the car, and we made arrangements to meet later.

Coming out of Mohamed Mahmoud Street, the traffic was extremely slow. Inching my way towards Tahrir Square, I decided to go to the hairdresser. At this point I remember having two things on my mind. In the background, the thought of having missed a conference on Wednesday gently gnawed at my mind. Would I be able to reach Nawal this afternoon to find out what had been discussed? The more immediate preoccupation involved the route to take, in view of the almost total gridlock. Would it be better to go to Zamalek by the Qasr El-Nil or the Sixth of October bridge?

Making up my mind that the former would be slightly faster, and plotting my course accordingly, I attempted to move slowly in the direction of the Egyptian Museum. It was no easy task and, while painfully trying to disentangle my car from hundreds of others, I thought I heard a loud bang, followed by a series of sharper pops, like firecrackers going off. Then a cloud of black smoke billowed up just ahead of me.

"What *is going on now?" I had* time to ask myself, thinking that construction work had begun on another ugly glassed-in cafeteria overlooking the square. Then I distinctly heard gunshots, screams, the sirens of the fire brigade, then more shots. My body, before my brains, registered that something was wrong: *my trembling foot* slipped off the clutch and the car stalled. I looked around uncomprehendingly. There were policemen everywhere, some hastily putting up barricades, others trying to redirect the traffic out of Tahrir Square, while simultaneously *stopping the hundreds of people who* seemed to be running towards the museum while others poured out in the opposite direction.

In the car next to me an elderly man was screaming hysterically. "They did it again, it's those terrorists, Oh God, Oh God..." *He stopped screaming* for a few seconds, muttered prayers, then started again. "Maybe they are shooting a film," I thought stupidly, but the truth finally sunk in. "I want to go to the American University," I screamed. "My daughter..." Everybody *around seemed to be shouting now. I heard more shots* and ducked instinctively. "Make room for me, I want to go to the university," I pleaded with the driver of the car on my left. "You can't, the roads are all blocked," he said nervously, but backed up a few inches nevertheless. "*It is a terrorist* attack," he *told nobody in particular* and shook his head, sighing loudly. "What is this world coming to!"

The traffic was moving at the pace of a panicked snail, and I tried to get a grip. "The university," I told myself firmly, "think of *nothing* else." I refused to contemplate the possibility of my daughter hearing the explosions and running across the square to find out what was going on, or trapped in a taxi trying to make her way towards the Corniche. How would I find her then? In time of danger one must stay together. And what if this was not a one-off attack; where would they strike next? I was muttering prayers like most of the terror-stricken drivers around me, trying all the while to get closer to the university.

Suddenly, there was a young policeman gesturing widely that I could take a left turn into Sheikh Rihan Street. "But this is wrong!" I hesitated for a split second before finally escaping: the human mind indeed functions in mysterious ways. So close to the university now, I was tempted to abandon the car and run all the way, but there again, old habits die hard and I waited my turn to hand the keys over to the garage attendant. Only then did I run, screaming hysterically all the way to the photocopying shop. My daughter was sitting inside, waiting calmly for her papers. Everything was in order in the shop: they had not heard the explosions a hundred yards away. I took one look at this quiet, everyday scene, another life away, and broke into sobs. "They blew up the museum," I wailed.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Jordanian chicken

Ingredients:

1 chicken (cut in 4)
2 onions (grated)
Corn oil
Salt + pepper + allspice + cinammon + dried oregano + *summa'* + 2 pods of cardamom.

Method:

Wash the chicken parts and season slightly with salt and pepper.

In a flat oven pan, heat some oil and add the onions. Stir until slightly golden. Add all the spices and stir them in well. Add the chicken parts. Stir them together with the seasoned grated onions until they colour. Add boiling water to cover the chicken. Cover and place in a preheated medium/high oven for half an hour. Uncover until top is golden red. Remove the cardamom pods. Serve with rice and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Hanky panky

Andrew Steele tastes the linen

Venice seems a long way off when one is sitting in La Gondola. The rattan chairs, the billowing awnings, the floods of greenery: the interior designers were obviously told to "do Italy". What one ends up with can be seen at so many of the pseudo-European outlets in the city and, although perfectly pleasant, it is bland as bland can be. In keeping with the Venetian theme, the waiters are bedecked in straw boaters with a black ribbon band. The three-piece band caterwauls Italian lounge *standards and seventies disco pulp* at an unnervingly high volume. The Chianti bottles drip their (unforgivably) white wax into little pools. The heady whiff of rancid canal is nowhere to be found, not even, to bend an idiom, in the mind's nose.

We were seated promptly and with some flourish, and presented with pleasingly crusty rolls and distinctly Egyptian breadsticks. The butter came in balls, which was nice. La Gondola has a fairly extensive and rather pricey menu, which lacks not one whit of imaginative flair.

We began with *Fondi di Carciofo con Burro ai Funghi Porcini* and *Insalata di Melanzane e Pomodori*, the former promising baked artichoke bottoms with cèpe butter, the latter a simple aubergine, tomato and mozzarella salad. Where, oh where, we deliberated, would one find cèpe mushrooms in Cairo? Perhaps clustering in a hidden dell or leafy glade? Unlikely, one has to admit. And indeed, mushrooms of the button variety adorned my bottoms, warmed and tossed in butter, along with slithers of vegetable, the whole draped with a melted slice of mozzarella. Disappointingly un-black and un-slimy, the dish was, however, really rather good, although having to read behind the lines of a menu has always rather riled me. The aubergine salad was a toothsome affair, the brazen black vegetable and plum tomatoes being tastefully drizzled with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

On to the main course. We waited with some effort — the starter portions having been elegant rather than generous — our eager palates salivating in tense anticipation. *My elementary Italian told me that* I had, in fact, ordered handkerchiefs with a ragout of quails (*Fazzoletti al Ragu' di Quaglia*) which held for me untold promise of finest marinated linen, strewn with bits of small but gamey bird. In reality, I'm afraid, this was not to be: Flat sheets of very good pasta, stir-fried vegetables, and a thin but tasty liquor, surrounded by a ring of quail breasts. Now, to my mind, a ragout is a rather thick affair, which clings to one's pasta for grim death, and certainly does not contain large quantities of soy sauce. Not at La Gondola. My companion delighted in the parcels of fresh tortelli, containing ox-tail (hmmm...) and wild mushrooms (again) in a rich red wine sauce. Excellent, if a little unorthodox.

Fine fare, all in all, then, at La Gondola, if a mite confused. Remove the corny three-piece band and it would make for a delightful evening's indulgence. And indulgence it is at LE 135 for dinner for two with three Stellas. Bring your own handkerchiefs.

La Gondola at Sonesta Hotel, 5 El-Tayaran Street, Nasr City
Tel: 261 7100

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

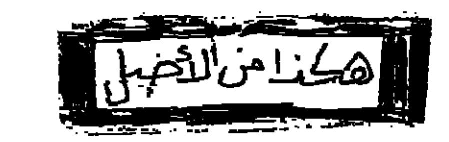
By Samia Abdennour

Across
1. Polygonal recesses (5)
6. Arabic common name (4)
10. Heaps of spore cases in fungus (4)
14. Branch where birds habitually sleep (5)
15. Threadlike strand covering head (4)
16. Candid (4)
17. Muse of lyric poetry (5)
18. Sample; timber beam of small crosssection (9)
20. Small river (6)
22. Protuberance in tree trunk (4)
23. Comb. Form "modern" (3)
24. Make plant pale by excluding light (8)
26. Superlative suffix (3)
27. Jot (4)
30. Barnyard sound (3)
31. The sixth sense, abb. (3)
33. Ballet necessity (3)
34. Make melodious sounds (4)
35. Important feature in dining room (5)
39. Died out (7)
41. Swell out; lighter-than-air craft (7)
43. Club for dancing to recorded music (5)
44. Festival (4)
45. Father (3)
46. Wise bird (3)
48. Cereal grain (3)
49. Some US agents, sl. (4)
50. The civet or leopard (3)
53. Referring to a lords demesne (8)
56. Forest tree with silver grey bark (3)
57. Correct text (4)
58. Place to give medical treatment (6)
62. Habitual (9)
65. Grecian market (5)
66. Listen to (4)
67. Gone, jumbled (4)
68. Personal pronoun (5)
69. Weather directions (4)
70. Thrived; progressed (4)
71. Steel, jumbled (5)

Down
1. God of war (4)
2. Type of wine (4)
3. Take wing (4)
4. Regard; hold in affection (6)
5. Ermine (5)
6. Expression of surprise, pl. (3)
7. Arrears of uncompleted work (7)
8. Moon goddess (5)
9. Highly decorated (6)
10. Musical note (3)
11. Express a belief (5)
12. M. Coty et al (5)
13. An oblong piece of cast metal (5)
19. Supporting bars of platform (7)
21. Ape (5)
25. Anglo-Indian camel (4)
27. Lying down (4)
28. Cab (4)
29. Crumbs (4)
32. Friend (3)
34. Ice compressed to resemble human figures (7)
36. Foreshow (4)
37. Burden; weight (4)
38. Terminates (4)
40. Int. Comm. Org. (3)
41. Bring forth (4)
42. Relating to ancient Athens (5)
44. Amount of film made for showing (7)
47. Cargo (6)
49. Journey through space (6)
50. Hiding place for treasures (5)
51. Pale (5)
52. Tossed (5)
54. More pleasant (5)
55. Having winglike appendages (5)
59. Christmas (4)
60. Goddess of the rainbow (4)
61. Be concerned (4)
63. Poem meant to be sung (3)
64. Situated near the ground (3)

WEPT AWARD SCAN
IVRE NADIR OLIO
PEON TRADE MESA
ENCODE MEATBALL
ENACT SMARTER
PAS ZEIN STE
ASS EDGAR ERODE
RIOT EERIE OKRA
KAROO REGAL EER
RUG SOSO YEN
JOGTROT RIGID
ALLUSION NODOSE
PEAR TBONE OKAY
AIDE RAGES LESE
NNES ESSES AYSS

Last week's solution



Like water and air

As students embarked on a new academic year this week, parents continued to perform what often seems an impossible juggling act to balance family income against a decent education for their children. Over half a century ago, Taha Hussein coined the slogan that free education, like water and air, is every citizen's right. But, as **Fatma Farag** discovers, free education is finding it hard to survive the century, while **Mariz Tadros** wonders whether today's schools and universities are preparing students for the real world





Over 200,000 new students enrolled in Egyptian universities this year, but neither high grades nor costly tuition can guarantee a job; and parents' worries begin with primary education *Photos: Randa Shaath*

It is back to school, and everyone is in a flurry. School uniforms bought, transport arrangements made, parents escort timid youngsters to their first day and teenagers are at last off the couch and doing something with their lives, but parents continue to worry. The cost of education is taking its toll on the family's budget. When private schools begin charging up to LE30,000 per year and many families opt out of the public school system, sending their kids to private schools in search of a better education, or to workshops where they sidestep the education system altogether, all cannot be well in the presumed haven of free education.

"It is a terrible time of the year," said Leila Ahmed, pulling her children closer in a crowded shop, "I have three children in school, and at the beginning of the year we have to buy them clothes, shoes, school supplies, and the prices are incredible." The preparation for the school year is a serious burden for most families, and some come up with drastic solutions.

"I know many families in my area who have kept their children away from school because they cannot afford to buy the school supplies," said *Hagga* Khadiga from the working-class district of Sayeda Zeinab. But it was not always so difficult, many parents still remember when public sector stores sold school uniforms at highly subsidised prices. "Unfortunately it is very difficult to find these now... only in cheap markets and they are of very poor quality. In public-sector stores a plastic school bag costs 30 pounds which is really expensive for us and this is just one item," said Khadiga.

Ahmed, who was buying her children's school needs from a middle-class store in Heliopolis, said "I have to strain my budget to buy them acceptable items, because I don't want them to look less well-dressed than their school-mates."

It was the prohibitive cost of education, and hence its deep class-bias, that inspired social reformers, over half a century ago, to initiate free primary education.

In 1944, a Wafd government passed a bill which made primary education free. In 1950, then Minister of Education Taha Hussein was adamant. The blind "doyen Arabic literature" and one of the founding fathers of "the Egyptian enlightenment", coined the phrase that echoes to this day: "Education is like water and air", a birthright that should be provided free to all citizens. His moral clout helped him press successfully for legislation making secondary school education free as well. But university education was to remain the domain of the well-off until 1962, when, under Gamal Abdel-Nasser's socialist regime, university tuition was waived.

Driven by the ideals of the 1952 Revolution, the Egyptian Constitution stipulates to this day that the government provide free education up to and including the university level to all citizens.

But the public school system, poorly funded and increasingly crowded, began to buckle. The beginning of the change came in 1979, when the Ministry of Education entered into competition with private sector schools and began creating "experimental schools," notes Said Ismail Ali, a professor at Ain Shams University and a prominent educationalist. The new schools offered an upgraded service, featuring improved language education and better classrooms, at a cost. Parents who wanted their children to go to these schools had to pay a comparatively substantial tuition fee. The schools were publicly run but only partially subsidised.

Ali argues this was against the constitution. "If you want to upgrade the education system you should make sure that it remains accessible to everyone... These schools were established to pave the way for the principle of charging more for extra services."

To date, regular public schools still outnumber experimental and private ones, but many believe that private education is expanding at the expense of free schooling and fear the implications.

Ahmed Fayek, a civil servant who sends his four children to public schools, is sceptical about the merits of a dual-price system for state-run schools. "Instead of papering over the fact that education is getting more expensive, why can't we bring it out in the open?... My brother sends his children to an experimental school and they still have to take private lessons, so what is the difference?"

Experts are equally uneasy. Ali questions the ethics of providing two types of the same public service: "In the public sector there is no accountability and this makes it dangerous to endorse [the duality] ... Further, it discriminates between those who are able to pay and those who aren't."

The difference in tuition fees between "regular" and "experimental" public schools is remarkable. Regular schools charge annual fees of LE25 for primary education, LE40 for the intermediary, and LE50 for the secondary — inclusive of books. Experimental schools charge approximately LE300 *for the corresponding service.*

"National" schools — foreign schools nationalized in the 1950s — have a separate state-supervised administration and their services and fees resemble those of experimental schools. All of these, as well as private schools, teach the same curricula and give the final year examination prepared by the Ministry of Education, the difference being in the quality of language education, activities, class size, and the overall state of the school facilities.

Free education, many parents argue, has turned into a shadow of its former self. It is no longer free, if you consider the hidden costs. Fayek points out that "public school fees may seem very low, but the real cost to us is much higher... We end up paying for books because the school children either don't receive all their books or they are of very bad quality... Then, there are private lessons. When a classroom is packed with over 60 students, do not tell me that the kids will not need extra tuition."

His son Hussein agrees. "It is very crowded and we sit on long benches and have arguments about who gets in to sit in the middle, because if you sit at the edge you will keep falling off." Public schools offer after-hour classes for students, but these are an added expense. "Each extra class costs LE12 to LE16 per month and includes between 15 to 20 students. So, it is not so cheap." says Fayek.

The problem of low-cost education is not just that it may lead to low-quality education, forcing parents to pay more for extra tuition, but it may dissuade lower income families from sending their offspring to school. According to Fardous Abdel-Hamid, a social worker from Helwan: "When low-income families see that their children are not learning and they have to pay [for private lessons], they are tempted to pull the kid out of school. This explains the high drop-out rate."

Some families, despite their limited budget, do it the hard way. *Hagga* Khadiga has just finished the education of her youngest son at a LE1,000-per year private school in Sayeda Zeinab. Over and above the exorbitant tuition fees, Khadiga says she had to pay LE300 for books and clothes and then more for extra classes. Khadiga managed the feat by asking the school to let her pay in instalments, entering into *gam'ias*, or saving societies, with her neighbours and taking loans from work.

While parents struggle with the education cost, hidden and unhidden, the government is fighting a battle to keep the ever-increasing tide of youngsters from breaking the banks of the state education system. The Ministry of Education has increased the number of primary schools by 6.7 per cent in the period 1990/1991-1994/1995. The number of enrolled students increased by 14.2 per cent within the same period. Last year, the number of those accepted into universities hit a record high indicating that the basic school system is coping with the country's needs, at least in terms of numbers.

There is room for improvement, Ali argues. "What we need is a major overhaul of the system... In order to make education more effective, we need to spend two to three times the present budget on education ... Right now, nearly 80 per cent of the budget of the Ministry of Education goes for paying the salaries of teachers, almost all of whom are drastically underpaid." Ali knows that an increase of such magnitude is unlikely in the near future, but argues that education is a sound investment. Education specialists point to the model of Third World success stories, such as South Korea and Thailand (*see opposite article*) to overhaul their education system and the economic merits of such a policy.

"Even if all you want is technicians or manual labour, do not imagine that this has nothing to do with education... Take, for example, the car industry. As technology improves, wouldn't an educated worker be better able to handle this?" remarks Ali.

As parents feel the pinch, educationalists grumble, and free education looks more like a two-way street with more traffic heading the private way.

Here is a riddle for you: How did some students get 105 per cent in their high school certificate this year? And why would students who scored 95 per cent in their exams be in mourning? Strange is perhaps the kindest way to describe this year's high school general certificate (*thanaweya amma*) exam results. This year's students were the first to undergo a new examination system (*al-thanaweya al-amma al-gadeeda*), formulated around the idea of an "amelioration system".

Students are given the chance to take four exams in a quest for the highest marks possible. The syllabus and exams are split over two years, instead of being completed in one. Each year, students take an end of year exam but then have the option of re-taking exams in subjects of their choice during the summer in an attempt to improve their results. The highest grades each year are the ones that count.

But students who got over 90 per cent in their exams did not have time to celebrate — their joy was soon dampened by the universities' admission coordinating office's announcement that due to the large number of students with very high marks and the limited university places available, the top ranking faculties such as medicine would only accept students with a minimum of 97.1 per cent. Dentistry required 96.1 per cent and pharmacy students needed 96.2 per cent to secure a place.

Under the new marking system more than 100 students got full marks and the number of high school certificate holders awaiting places at universities and institutes far exceeded any other year. The new system was blamed, and the Cabinet suddenly announced that the system of amelioration may be abolished.

But Hussein Bahaeddin, minister of education, defended the system. In recent statements to the press he pointed out that one of the main objectives of the amelioration system was to remove the anxiety linked with the one exam system. Those who got full marks, or even scored more than 100 per cent, did so because they gained additional points for doing A-level languages, he added.

For the minister, the large percentage of students with high marks was not exceptionally striking as the scores were only 1.5-2 per cent higher than last year. The number of students who got over 95 per cent was only around four per cent of the total number of students who passed the certificate.

The proposal to scrap the new system was met with both sighs of relief and disappointment by the Egyptian public. Moushira Abdel-Malek, whose daughter Yasmine has just completed her high school certificate and has been accepted at the American University in Cairo, welcomed the move to abolish the amelioration system. While it gave the average student a chance to better his mark, some non-serious students took advantage of the system by not bothering to study for the first exam, knowing that they would have a second go, she said.

The two principle aims of the new amelioration system — to reduce exam nerves and the financial burden of private tuition costs, which the government believed would be less because students had longer to prepare and two attempts at the exam, — were anything but met. For Abdel-Malek, basically all the new system meant was "that it split the agony over two years."

Mustafa Ibrahim, a Cairo taxi driver whose daughter got her certificate this year, agrees with middle-class Abdel-Malek. The new two-year system made things worse for his family, both psychologically and financially. "We simply could not take a summer holiday, why should a young person have to go through 24 consecutive months of studying? Even if he doesn't want to improve his mark, his parents won't leave him alone, they'll insist that he redo the exam... it just becomes sheer hell at home," he said.

After sitting the two additional amelioration examinations, Ibrahim's daughter still only got 61.3 per cent, and yet private tuition cost him almost twice as much as it had cost for his elder daughter who went through the old one year system. "I spent between LE300-400 a month on individual and group private lessons," he said. Ibrahim wants the *thanaweya amma* to go back to being one year.

A retired school teacher and concerned parent also felt that the only solution was a return to the old one-year system where the syllabus was divided over the second and third year of secondary school. Students would no longer need to take private lessons in the summer and someone who achieved brilliant marks in the first round of exams would not be equated with someone who had two chances to get the same grade. "It became a real dilemma for the good students who got, for instance, 93 per cent in the first round of examinations and didn't know whether that was good enough or whether they should aim even higher," he said.

"Dr Bahaeddin has inherited a system which is full of flaws — education is but a subsystem in a general system — the issues affecting education cannot be divorced from the general policies and practices around," said Professor Abdel-Azim Anis, an educational expert. He did, however, have reservations about the new examination system. While the concepts were fine, the actual implementation of four national examinations was unrealistic, he said. Administratively, the whole operation was overwhelming.

Because of the large numbers of students sitting the exams last summer, some papers got lost, he explained. "Some mishaps might be avoided if the examination had been done on a regional, rather than national level, administratively it would have been easier," he said.

Rasmi Abdel-Malek Rostom, head of the planning department at the National Institute for Educational Research and Development, defended the new examination system, saying that the flaws did not outweigh its advantages. A new examination system should be given at least a five-year trial period before conclusions are drawn, he added. Rostom pointed out that the fact that students were getting higher grades was not bad. "There is nothing wrong with a bit of healthy competition. What does it matter in the end when only those who scored highest will get into the best places? Personally I see that the system of amelioration, with additional regulations such as only the second mark counting, would work."

Dr Mufid Shehab, minister of higher education and scientific research, is in no enviable position. About 400,000 students from the old and new *thanaweya amma* applied to Egyptian universities this year, 50,000 more than last year. Shehab told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the government recognises university education as a long-term investment and so the universities' budget has increased along with the increasing number of students. "Public expenditure on the 12 universities for 1981/2 was LE300 million, this year it is LE3,327 million — 10 times the amount," he said.

But Shehab admitted that 1997 is a particularly difficult year. "There is a problem this year because of the large number of students, the numbers keep multiplying and many people have very high grades." This year universities accepted 240,000 students and other governmental and non-governmental institutes of higher learning took 58,000.

Shehab blames the amelioration exam system for the overload and the additional points which students may gain through doing A-level languages. The examination system should be re-evaluated, Shehab asserted, so that "there are questions for the average student, for the above average and for the distinguished, so that we have a multi-levelled pyramid, not an abnormal rise in percentages," he said.

The whole education policy is being reviewed by the Cabinet, to try and bring it into line with the needs of the labour market. "Expansion must continue but new specialisations must be introduced which are more in line with the country's market needs or in areas where there are shortages."

Shehab said that a comprehensive strategy to modernise university education has been presented to the Cabinet. This has been approved, but if it is to be effective, it must be equated with reform in the pre-university educational level as well.

"We have widened the accessibility to university education but this has come at the cost of quality... a trade-off between quality and quantity," said Nader Fergany, head of the Cairo-based Al-Mishkat Research Centre, who has conducted several research studies on the quality of education in Egypt. Fergany insists that the gravity of the situation in the labour market today stems from problems with primary school education, because if Egyptians miss out on basic skills, their after-school education and entry onto the job market will suffer.

The education budget is largely to blame for Egypt's problems, Fergany believes. Although Egypt has increased its education budget, it is still not enough. It has been calculated, for instance, that any government should spend $500 a year on a primary school student. In Egypt an average of only $20 per student per year is allocated. Expenditure on higher education in Egypt per capita in real terms has declined to one quarter of its level in 1980, according to Fergany. Also the number of pupils receiving schooling in Egypt remains much lower than in Turkey, South East Asia or Israel, Thailand and Korea because of the high drop-out rate, he said.

Those who do well at school or university often end up frustrated when they enter the labour market because, as Fergany put it, "education carries no value in this society."

"If you look into the returns of education in pure economic terms, you find that they are very limited," he said. "The labour market does not even acknowledge your education in terms of higher earnings. Intermediary education actually leads to lower earnings than no education. Mechanics and plumbers who have not gone to school or have dropped out of education often make more money than someone who has finished his university education only to end up on the streets for a few years." To put it bluntly, education puts you into the high unemployment risk category.

This has been particularly so under recent economic reform and adjustment policies because the public sector is no longer expected to absorb the increasing numbers of high school and university graduates, and the economy is not growing at a pace which generates enough new job opportunities to absorb new entrants into the job market, according to Fergany.

In the mid-1990s, a government survey based on the registration of unemployed graduates of intermediate and higher education showed an estimated 1.4 million of them were unemployed. According to Fergany the real figure is closer to three million. The situation is even grimmer when government projections show that the working age group (15-64) will be the fastest growing in the population up to 2010.

Dr Samir Radwan, head of the development polices department at the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, said that the incongruence between education and labour needs in Egypt became more dramatic during the 1990s. Until then the employment problem was dormant because Egypt's surplus workforce was exported to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. An estimated three million people, 10-15 per cent of the labour force, was being exported. When labour export collapsed, and recession hit the country, it was catastrophic because "the educational system was not geared to satisfy the local labour market but more to satisfy the labour markets in the receiving countries," explained Radwan.

The lack of synchronisation between education and labour needs almost makes the issue of examination systems seem irrelevant, the true problem is much larger. "The labour market requires maintenance — qualified people in the areas of buildings, roads, cars and household appliances and yet those doing the job now have learn it on the job," said Radwan. And while the country has a surplus of university graduates especially from the humanities, it is suffering from a tremendous shortage in certain professions like nursing. "People just go to university in a suicidal mood — we go to university as if it is a fatal attraction and then we are surprised when we see a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering washing dishes or piling tiles," Radwan added.

Unless there is greater sensitivity in education to labour needs, Egypt risks being marginalised in the international markets, insisted Radwan. The findings of the 1996 World Economic Forum Report, which assessed a country's competitiveness on a global level, highlighted his argument. Egypt, overall, ranked 29th out of the 49 countries considered. It scored high marks for its institutions and government but dropped when it came to the education of its labour force — it ranked 41 on basic skills.

Underwater... with a little help

Diving is now within the reach of the disabled people who visit the Gulf of Aqaba. **Sherine Nasr** looks into how Egypt takes care of its special visitors

The warm, translucent waters of the Red Sea are becoming a favourite destination for the disabled. Last month, the resort of Taba on the Gulf of Aqaba hosted a number of disabled tourists who are members of the Scuba Trust (ST), a registered UK charity trust. "We have been bringing groups of disabled students and qualified divers to the Red Sea resorts since November 1993," says ST General Administrator Leon Golding. "We have introduced over three hundred people, both disabled and able-bodied, to the delights of diving and snorkelling in Egypt." The diving offered was a combination of diving offshore and diving from a boat. The latter proved more suited for disabled people.

"We come to Egypt to dive because the sea is warm, the coral and marine life superb and the people friendly and helpful," adds Golding. The ST arranges about six trips a year for its disabled clients to Sharm El-Sheikh, Hurghada and Taba. "We prefer Sharm El-Sheikh where more hotels there are specially equipped for people in wheelchairs. Moreover, the diving is interesting and varied and can be carried out in safe, sheltered conditions, close to the shore, thus avoiding long boat trips in rough seas," Golding remarks.

Egypt's top-of-the-scale hotels provide access and facilities adapted to the special needs of the disabled, but beyond the financial reach of many of them. Less-pricey hotels lack a disabled-friendly design, Golding points out. Bathroom accessibility, Golding says, is a major problem. Bathrooms should be spacious and with wide doors to allow for wheelchair manoeuverability. Support bars should be provided near the shower and toilet.

What Egypt lacks in facilities, however, it makes up for in generous assistance. "We have found the hotel management and staff anxious to do all they can to make the holiday as comfortable as possible for everyone," Golding remarks.

Graham Taylor, a leg amputee, was impressed with the service and commended the variety of food. Tricia Thompson, who visits Sharm El-Sheikh regularly to dive, says she is pleased with the "genuine friendliness, excellent and professional instruction, along with a lot of fun and laughter. We were well taken care of."

Disabled tourists should be encouraged to come to Egypt, says diving expert Hisham Gabr, who is planning to host a group of US disabled divers. "More attention is being given to provide disabled-friendly facilities along the Red Sea coast," he adds.

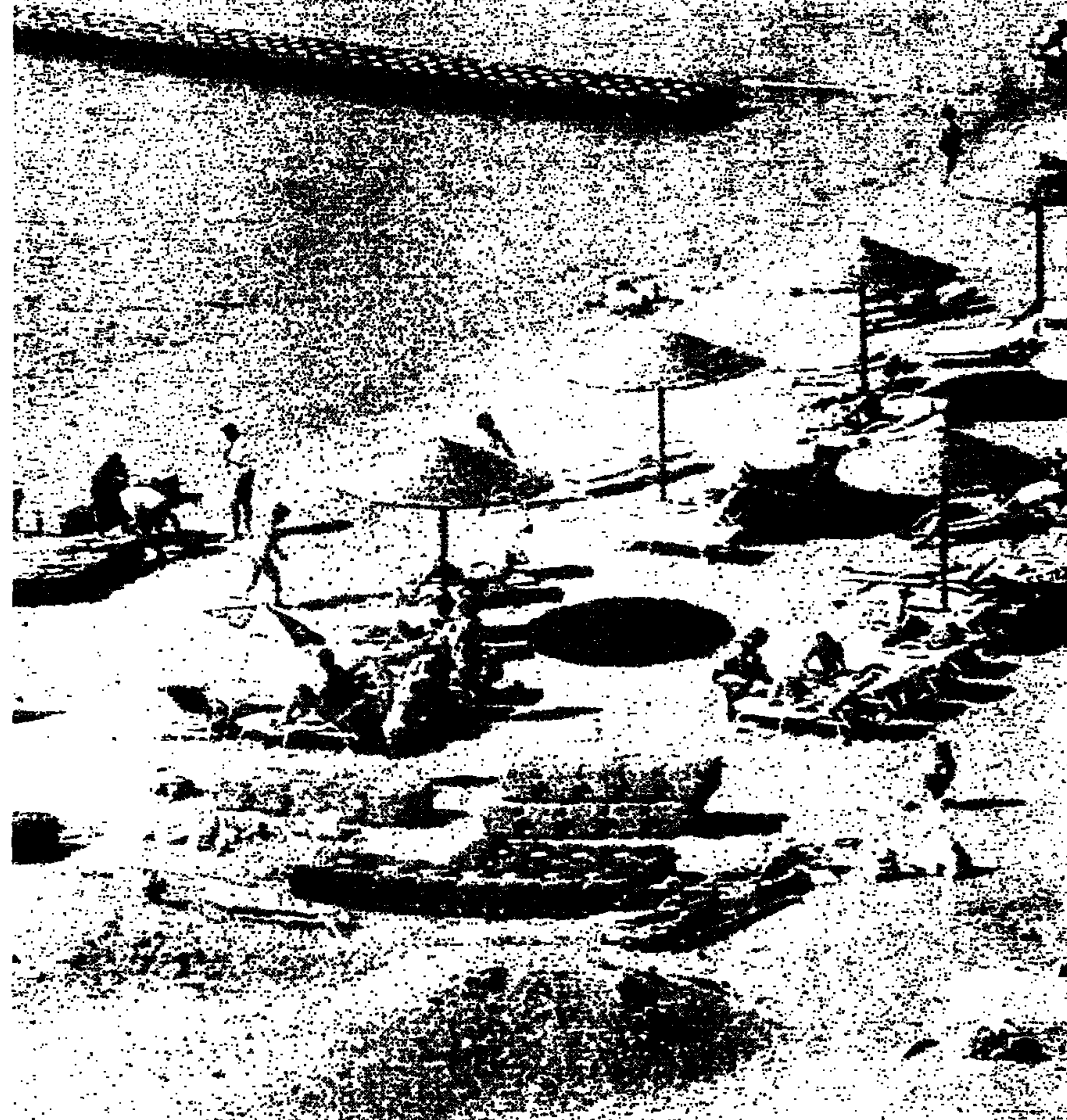
In fact, diving and snorkelling, sports for which the Red Sea is particularly known, are being actively promoted as the most appropriate sport for people with disabilities. "Underwater they can move freely and this gives them a greater sense of independence," Gabr explains.

Gabr, who is in the process of building a hotel and diving school, says that he will equip five rooms out of the hotel's 50 with everything disabled clients may need: wide doors, level floors, suitable bathrooms, as well as ramps to access the reception, restaurants, bar and swimming pool. "The ST has been consulted on the design and layout of a number of wheelchair-accessible rooms," he says.

The ST, which organises trips to various diving destinations including Turkey, Portugal, Cuba, the Canary Islands and the USA, has decided to spend their next diving holiday, commencing on 13 November, in Sharm El-Sheikh. Golding compares Egypt favourably with other destinations. "Of course, the USA is geared to cater for the disabled, but the services are expensive. Other destinations are not up to the required standard. But Egypt, both from the diving and accessibility points of view has a great deal to offer."

"We shall have 12 dives all from boats. So far, 39 people with a wide range of disabilities have already confirmed their bookings," says Golding.

Egypt is gaining some experience in providing hospitality to people with special needs, but more has to be done. The Giza Plateau provides relatively smooth access from a distance to the attractions of the Pyramids, the Sphinx and the various tombs, but most archaeological sites in the country still lack the design necessary to allow wheelchair accessibility. Most disabled, as well as able-bodied, visitors will find Cairo streets an ordeal. But, somewhere under the calm surf of the Red Sea, it is a different story.





More handicap-friendly facilities are now available at Sharm El-Sheikh and underwater sport is recognised as one of *the most suitable for* people with disabilities

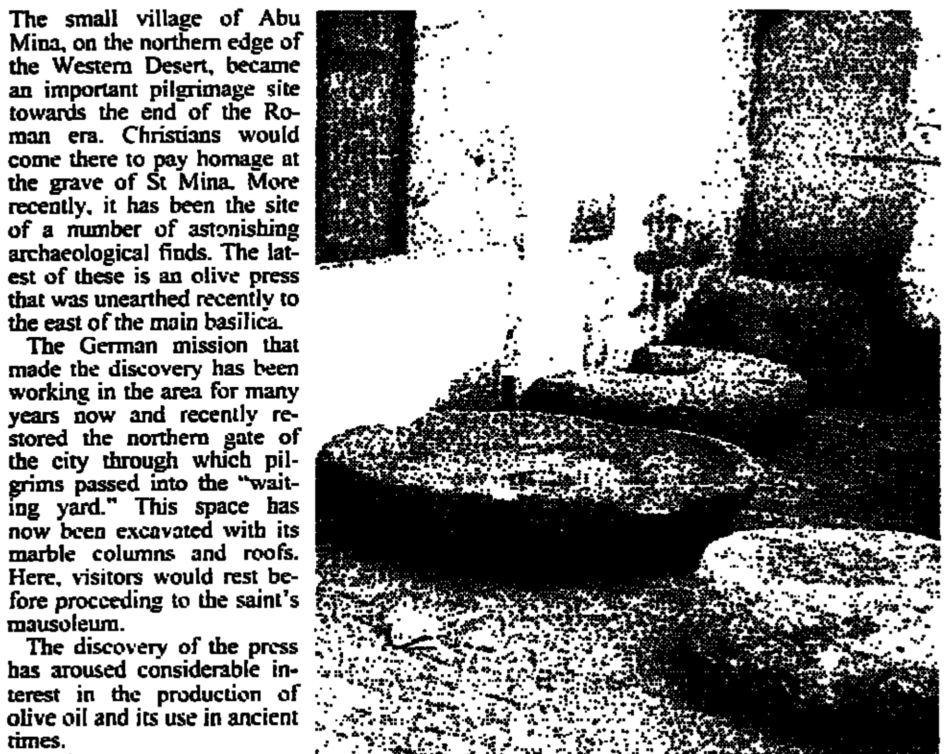
Olives and legends

The ruins of the ancient site of Abu Mina, west of Alexandria, continue to yield up their treasures. The latest find, described here by **Samir Naoum**, is a fourth-century olive press

The small village of Abu Mina, on the northern edge of the Western Desert, became an important pilgrimage site towards the end of the Roman era. Christians would come there to pay homage at the grave of St Mina. More recently, it has been the site of a number of astonishing archaeological finds. The latest of these is an olive press that was unearthed recently to the east of the main basilica.

The German mission that made the discovery has been working in the area for many years now and recently restored the northern gate of the city through which pilgrims passed into the "waiting yard." This space has now been excavated with its marble columns and roofs. Here, visitors would rest before proceeding to the saint's mausoleum.

The discovery of the press has aroused considerable interest in the production of olive oil and its use in ancient times.



Granite mortars at Abu Mina *photo: Samir Naoum*

Ancient Egyptians are known to have extracted oil from olives, flax, sesame seeds, almonds, lettuce and cinnamon. "These [oils] were not used only for cooking purposes, but some served also for lighting, and others for medical purposes and as perfumes," says Mohammed Abdel-Aziz, head of the Coptic and Islamic Department of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities in Alexandria.

In Ancient Egypt there were many different names for olives, such as *zetno*, *gemo* and *dgary*. "The first mention of an olive tree is in an early dynastic text. There are two references to olive trees in the Pyramid Texts of the fifth and sixth dynasties, one of them to a sacred olive tree in Heliopolis," he said. "Moreover, olive oil is mentioned among the booty from the war in Syria that is recorded in a mortuary temple at Abu Sir, and there is a reference to the olive harvest of Ramses II's gardens in a New Kingdom papyrus."

Some scholars believe that the olive was first planted in Egypt in 3200BC, since the tree is first depicted by artists during the New Kingdom. Others claim that the tree was brought to Egypt from western Asia at the time of the great migration that followed Egypt's conquests in Western Asia, when the empire extended as far as the Euphrates. "Small olive branches were found in Tutankhamun's tomb," said Abdel-Aziz. A branch bearing leaves which dates from between the 20th and 26th dynasties is conserved in the Egyptian Museum.

Although the olive tree has been known in Egypt since ancient times, it was only after the Greek conquest, under the reign of the Ptolemies, that it began to be cultivated on any considerable scale in the area of Arsinoe in the Fayoum, as well as around Alexandria.

Historical records have survived describing the art of extracting oil from olives by crushing them on huge granite mortars. But the recent discovery at Abu Mina throws a new light on the subject. It now appears certain that, after crushing, the fruit was pressed and then placed in small bags made of goat's wool, where it was left for a few days for the oil to drain, leaving only a residue.

Despite this new evidence of the production techniques used, it is certain that olive oil was only produced in small amounts in Egypt. Supplementary supplies were imported from Palestine and Syria and, later, from Greece. By then, it was the *fashion for* women to wear crowns of olive leaves, just as olive garlands were awarded to the champions at the Olympic Games.

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (*Heliopolis*), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.
Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.
Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 9.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE306 for foreigners, LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63, second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains. Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22, second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE899 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE257 for Egyptians, LE945 *for foreigners*, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions. Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has It All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ceg.ceg.uiuc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian *tour operator, which* specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.
http://intercuz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.
http://www.datum.com.eg/~city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment *guide. It is* the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CDs besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayan.
http://watt.seas.virginia.edu/~aoa5v is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Sunny summer deals

Hotels and travel agencies are still offering special prices which are valid for Egyptians and foreign residents

Travel agencies

New City Travel is offering trips to Paris, London, Damascus and Beirut. Trips to Paris go for LE1890 for 8 days including accommodation on breakfast basis. Another 15-day trip combines Paris and London for LE3990 including accommodation in three-star hotels including open buffet breakfast. A week trip to Damascus and Beirut costs LE2090. The price includes accommodation in four-star hotels on breakfast basis.

Hotels

Cairo
Pyramids Park Hotel, an Inter-Continental global partner resort, is offering a single room for LE160 and a double for LE180 including service fees and taxes, 20 per cent discount on all food items, free shuttle bus to city centre and free use of the exercise room. Prices are valid until October.

Sonesta Hotel Cairo is offering double rooms for LE220 and singles for LE200 including breakfast and taxes

South Sinai
Sharm El-Sheikh
Sonesta Beach Resort Sharm El-Sheikh is offering a rate of LE260 for double rooms and LE190 for single rooms including breakfast, taxes and services.
Coral Bay Resort is offering a rate of LE120 per person for double rooms and is also offering a rate of LE700 for 7 nights including breakfast. Prices are valid until the end of September.

Dahab
Novotel Dahab is offering a rate of LE200 per person for double rooms for three days including breakfast buffet. The offer is valid until September 1997.

Red Sea
Sonesta Beach Resort Hurghada is offering a rate of LE266 for double rooms and LE210 for singles on half-board basis including taxes and service charge.

Compiled by ***Rehab Saad***

Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life

201

Ninety years ago, the former British high commissioner in Egypt antagonised all sectors of the Egyptian population by exposing his thoughts on Egyptian society, culture and religion in *Modern Egypt*. Dr Yunan Labib Rizk details the Egyptian reaction as seen through *Al-Ahram* reports of the time



Lord Cromer

In mid-November 1907, the London correspondent for the *Egyptian Morning News* reported that Lord Cromer had contracted with MacMillan's publishing firm to publish a book on modern Egypt. Lord Cromer, wrote the correspondent whose dispatch was quoted in *Al-Ahram*, "is currently in the process of completing this work at his home in London. The book is due to appear this spring." The forthcoming book was none other than Cromer's two volume, *Modern Egypt*, a massive study based largely on the author's experience as British high commissioner in Egypt from 1883-1907. Cromer had just left Egypt approximately six months previously.

Few works published this century would cause such an outcry in Egypt. Yet, before its appearance, expectations were high. *Al-Ahram* was quick to express its enthusiasm for the forthcoming book: "This book is certain to be highly valuable in light of Lord Cromer's extensive knowledge on Egyptian matters, whether social, political, ethnic, administrative or religious; indeed all matters that touch upon the present and future of the land of the pharaohs. It is widely known that Lord Cromer is a courageous, independent thinker, fearless of either censure or reproach. There is no way to believe that the forthcoming book will be lacking in any manner."

Such optimism was sorely misplaced. When the book did appear four months later, in March 1908, *Al-Ahram* appeared of two minds. On the one hand, it seemed to agree with Reuters' review which was unstinting in its acclaim for the new book: "Its unique and original narrative packs many astonishing facts and presents a thorough study of modern Egypt."

Simultaneously, however, the newspaper featured the editorial of *L'Etendard*, the French language version of *Al-Liwa*, the mouthpiece of the Nationalist Party. *L'Etendard* described Cromer's book as "a narrative of murky historical events with little additional light shed upon them." As for Cromer himself, the newspaper wrote, "He detested all the khedives of Egypt with the exception of Tawfiq and the second volume of his work contains a vicious attack against Islam, which he considers incapable of sustaining reform. He speaks disdainfully of all Egyptians, particularly the Copts, reserving his praise exclusively for British workers and businessmen. Cromer is also inclined toward granting Egypt administrative independence. However, he says that it will take several generations before this aspiration can be reached.

The following day, 5 March 1908, *Al-Ahram* presented to its readers translated excerpts from *Modern Egypt*, a few copies of which had already arrived in Cairo. *Al-Ahram* went straight for what promised to be the most contentious portions of the book: the chapters on the Muslims and the Christians of Egypt.

Egyptians in general, according to Cromer, are "a collection of diverse and disparate peoples of manifold religions, mores and customs. Most of the people are peasants who have little idea of anything and the minority is a smattering of peoples from all horizons and differing religious and ideological affiliations or mercenaries of various extraction who care little for Egypt's welfare." It is Great Britain's task, he said, to make of this nation "a simple people, sound of body, honourable of word and strong of build," a goal, he added, "that is impossible to achieve with these numerous entities."

Islam as a religion was not spared Cromer's animosity. Islam may have instilled the creed of a single God, he wrote, but it has failed as a social order. According to *Al-Ahram*, he attributed this "failure", "firstly, to the debasement of women; secondly, to the fact that Islam, by following tradition more closely than the Qur'an, has bound religion and law into a single body so that it is impossible to separate the two and thereby effect change."

Evidently, Cromer dwelt at length on this second point before moving to his third and fourth arguments, namely that "Islam is too lenient with regard to slavery while it does not actively encourage it" and that "Islam has developed a reputation as an intolerant religion, an attribute which is correct in some respects, although it is inaccurate as an attribute of the religion as a whole."

The "vindictive Lord Cromer" as an *Al-Ahram* writer called him shortly after his book was released, was no less hostile toward Egyptian Copts. Apart from their confessional affiliation, according to Cromer, "The Copts are like the Muslim Egyptians in every respect from their head to their feet; in their language, morals and spirit. Their women wear the veil in the manner of Muslim women. They have their children circumcised as is the case with Muslim children and the Coptic customs in weddings and funerals bear a striking likeness to the Muslim customs on these occasions."

If Cromer's treatment of the "Christians in Egypt" united Egyptian reaction, his book also revealed irrefutably to the Copts that a shared religion with the occupiers could never be grounds for common cause against the overriding bonds of national and cultural affiliation.

"The Europeans in Egypt" was another topic in *Modern Egypt* that drew *Al-Ahram*'s attention. Cromer divided Europeans in Egypt into three categories. In the first category fell those of southern European origin, such as Greeks and Italians, as well as Jews. These, he said, "have only to live in the Orient for several years until they themselves become Oriental". The second category consisted of the French, who, he wrote with some bafflement, "would sometimes follow French modes and customs to the extreme while at other times you would see them taking on the oriental customs to the point of fanaticism."

With the British, his third category of Europeans, Cromer abandoned any pretense to humility. There were relatively few British in Egypt, he wrote. Most of them were in commerce and lived in Alexandria, using agents to represent them in the countryside. The British, he continued, "are extremely honest and forthright in their commercial dealings, into which they devote all their energies. The Englishman knows his rights and knows that should anyone attempt to impinge upon these rights, he will be able to seek redress." In general, he added, all the British in Egypt, whether engaged in commerce or in government service, "comport themselves with the greatest respect for themselves and for others. Their presence in Egypt is both a benefit and an honour to their country."

In a later chapter, discussing the future of Egypt, Cromer argued that the welfare of the country was dependent upon the continued British presence. If Britain withdrew its protection from the country and succeeded in securing guarantees from the other powers that they would remain neutral, Egypt would revert to ruin.

Cromer could not have conceived a surer way to provoke Egyptian outrage. *Al-Ahram*'s lead article on 9 March 1908 illustrates the country's pervading sense of insult and injury. Entitled "Lord Cromer describes himself", the article describes the furore with which Egyptians greeted the book, for having found themselves depicted as "no more than the peasant behind his plow and the donkey driver on his cart, ignorant, foolish and stupid."

The newspaper took particular exception to Cromer's argument that the Egyptians were a hodgepodge of diverse peoples. "The Egyptian nation is like all other nations in that it is made up of the descendants of the ancient peoples of the Nile Valley and the descendants of new arrivals who have assimilated into the nation. *Otherwise, why should* we call Napoleon French when actually he is of Italian origin? Why should we think of Cromer as British and Roosevelt as American when the former is of German origin and the latter of Dutch origin? Indeed, one of our major flaws is for ourselves to fall prey to this logic and continue to think of ourselves as distinct and separates sects that cannot coalesce into a single national entity and become a true power."

Two days later, *Al-Ahram* featured a follow-up article entitled, "Lord Cromer: specious conclusions from false premises." This article attempted to refute Cromer's claim that Islam is responsible for the "backwardness" in Muslim countries. The author argues, "Islam in the age of the Abbasid caliphs was the religion of both the rulers and the majority of the populace of the Orient. Did it impede them from transmitting the science and philosophy of the ancient Greeks? Was it an obstacle to the advancement of thought and the spread of knowledge? Were ideas constricted to a narrow scope of imagination and judgment? Not in the slightest. Islam in the vigour of its youth and the height of its glory nourished freedom, glory, justice, equality and development so that Egypt and Syria became international capitals of learning and Baghdad was a font of scholarship and science."

The article then suggested that the British government was in collusion with Cromer over the publication of the book. "It is difficult to grant that Lord Cromer published this work without first soliciting the opinion of his government."

Al-Ahram also opened its pages for readers to vent their objections. On 7 April, a certain Mohamed Zaki argued that while Europe was still in the Dark Ages, the Islamic caliphs "inspired the dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment so that Baghdad, Basra, Samarkand, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and Cordova were springs of philosophy and science from which the Europeans in their Middle Ages could drink and discover the industries and arts that ultimately lifted them from the abyss to the heavens."

Another reader, Mahmoud Anis Bek, a prominent member of the National Party, complained, "It was not enough for Cromer to make Egyptians taste the bitterness of his policies for 25 years. He wanted to set down before the whole of Europe what he considers to be every flaw and then has the audacity to attack the book of God which for 1325 years has stood invincible." He then appealed to the members of the General Assembly to defend their nation and demand their rights, an appeal that would soon meet a resounding answer.

Indeed, it was a member of the General Assembly who, on 11 April, submitted to *Al-Ahram* what he called "My simple proposal." The author, who remains anonymous to this day, stated that he had heard many people say that they intended to give a point-by-point response to *Modern Egypt*, yet their intentions were never translated into deeds.

His proposal read, "Lord Cromer has leveled sharp allegations against all Egyptians, the Orient and Islam in a book that, according to the British press, has already sold 50,000 copies. To this one book a single book must respond at length, supporting our arguments with official evidence all collated in single volume. As no single individual can devote the many years it will take to fulfill this project, I propose that a committee should be formed, consisting of scholars and historians with the necessary expertise in compiling the historical evidence and official documentation in order to provide a comprehensive and accurate version of Egypt's history and the role Islam played in the spread of civilisation and development. This work will not simply serve as an answer to Cromer but as a reference for ourselves and future generations in which we can read our history and learn the principles of progress and tolerance that are fundamental to our religion."

Sadly, to our knowledge, in the 90 years that have passed since the publication of *Modern Egypt*, no attempt has been made to put this proposal into effect. Cromer's book has thus remained a major historical resource with no other source available to refute the many inaccuracies and fallacies it contains.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



Money & Business

Exporting gas to Jordan

AL-SAID Mohamed Saleh Al-Hawrani, Jordanian minister of petroleum and mineral resources, stated after a meeting with his Egyptian counterpart, Dr Hamdi El-Banbi, that plans are in the works to establish a natural gas pipeline to export natural gas to Jordan. The pipeline will transfer more that 3 million cubic feet of natural gas daily, and is expected to eventually reach up to 400 million cubic feet per day.

El-Hawrani also said that many Jordanian companies will benefit from the expertise of Egyptian companies in prospecting for oil.

Japanese grant for wheat production

ZAFER El-Bishri, minister of planning and international cooperation, and the Japanese ambassador to Cairo, signed an agreement which will provide Egypt with a 2.7 billion yen grant for boosting wheat production in Kafr El-Sheikh Governorate and Beheira. A portion of the Japanese grant will be directed towards improving the quality of drinking water in the Haram district.

The signing of the agreement was witnessed by Maher El-Guindi, governor of Giza. El-Bishri stated that the drinking water project includes a 5.5km-long water distribution line.

NBE loans small-scale businesses

IN LINE with the state's general policy, which aims at encouraging intensively-laboured projects, NBE has decided on amending and softening the terms of loans granted to small businesses with a view to promoting the role of the private sector in economic development, creating new job opportunities and enhancing the bank's role in financing such businesses. Accordingly, NBE has approved the following:

— The bank shall finance projects with investment cost of LE500,000 excluding the land and buildings (instead of LE200,000). On the other hand, the repayment period has been extended to a maximum of 7 years, with a two-year grace period, (instead of a maximum repayment period of five years, with only a three-month grace period).

— Regarding working capital loans, the repayment period shall be determined according to both the cycle of the working capital and the projects' cash flows, with a maximum of two years, including a maximum six-month grace period (instead of a two-year repayment period with a three-month grace period).

It has also been decided that feasibility studies of the small-scale businesses shall not be referred to the Feasibility Studies Department. However, the preparation of the relevant economic data should be undertaken in accordance with the set models and standards.

— Simple interest rate shall be calculated on a half-yearly basis.

— In light of its policy geared towards creating more job opportunities and supporting youth and graduates' small-scale projects, the bank has decided decreasing self-finance of small-scale projects to 40 per cent (instead of 50 per cent) of the project's investment cost. Such a percentage may be decreased to 25 per cent in the case of technically-trained graduates, taking into account the sums spent by the client in relation to the investment costs of the established project. Hence, finance will not be confined to new projects or their relevant expansions.

The endeavours that NBE exerts to finance and support small-scale projects constitute an integral part of its strategy which is tilted towards enhancing the economic reform programme and giving momentum to the development process in Egypt.

National Bank of Egypt

A weekly update on the NBE Securities Market Index from 14 to 18 September 1997

The NBE Index has increased 3.81 points to register 409.51 points for the week ending 18/9/1997 against 405.7 points for the previous week ending 11/9/1997.

4 largest increases and decreases:

Company	Changes %
El-Nasr for Canning Agricultural Products Co.	11.7+
El-Said for Contract Co.	10.5+
United Housing & Development Co.	9+
Telemisr Co.	8.7+

Company	Changes %
Alex. Spinning & Weaving Co.	9.7-
Unirab Spinning and Weaving Co.	5.6-
Rakta Co.	5.25-
Société Genérale Pour Les Produits De Ceramique Co.	4.93-

Kemet to distribute AutoCAD in Egypt

AUTOCAD has reigned supreme over other computer-aided design software packages for the past 15 years. Autodesk Co. is now pleased to announce the release of AutoCAD 14, the latest and best version ever. Not only because AutoCAD 14 is the fastest, but because it also offers maximum results. Autodesk made many modifications and added new features to AutoCAD 14, resulting in the most developed version for use with Windows 95 NT. AutoCAD 14 is even faster than version 12. Along with the release of AutoCAD 14 are new releases of various applications from Autodesk, compatible with version 14, such as: GIS (Autodesk World and MAP Guide), AutoCAD MAP, in addition to the Softdesk line of architectural and engineering applications, Mechanical Desktop applications for solid surface and integrated assembly modelling.

Autodesk is thereby pleased to announce the release of AutoCAD 14 for sale in Egypt at all authorised agents, among them Kemet Co.



photos: Khaled El-Fiqi and Amr Gamal

Gotcha! At last, the Brazilian team capture the only world trophy that had consistently escaped their grasp, thanks to their flair and sheer determination

FIFA/JVC U-17 World Championship 1997: Facts and Figures

Matches played: 32
Goals scored: 124
94 in the preliminaries, 30 in the finals
Group A: 21 goals
Group B: 32 goals
Group C: 26 goals
Group D: 15 goals

Matches won/lost: 28
Matches decided by penalty shootout: 1
Matches drawn: 4
Yellow cards: 105
Red cards: 7
Spectators: 775,000
Best attacking team: Spain - 22 goals
Worst attacking team: New Zealand - 0 goals
Best defending team: Brazil - 2 goals
Worst defending team: New Zealand - 22 goals
Highest scoring match: Spain vs New Zealand - 13-0
Lowest scoring match: Ghana vs Argentina - 0-0

Awards
Top scorer
David Rodriguez-Fraile Huete (Spain) — 7 goals
Golden Ball:
Sergio Zubizarreta Villanueva (Spain)
Silver Ball:
Fabio Pinto (Brazil)
Bronze Ball:
Afriye Owusu (Ghana)
Fair Play Award: Argentina

The All-Star Team
Eleven players from among the 16 participating teams were selected for the MasterCard All-Star Team:
Casillas Iker - goalkeeper (Spain)
Hani Said - libero (Egypt)
Bugri Francis - defender (Germany)
Gabriel Milito - defender (Argentina)
Afriye Owusu - defender (Ghana)
Ferrugem Ramos - midfielder and playmaker (Brazil)
Attram Godwin Ashit - midfielder and forward (Ghana)
Camacho Juan - midfielder (Spain)
Jorginho Castro - midfielder (Brazil)
Aboubakr Jendo - forward (Mali)
Sergio Santamaria - forward (Spain)

Final results

Quarter-finals	
Egypt vs Spain	1-2
Germany vs Mali	4-3 (penalties)
Brazil vs Argentina	2-0
Ghana vs Oman	4-1
Semi-finals	
Brazil vs Germany	4-0
Ghana vs Spain	2-1
3/4 Play-off	
Spain vs Germany	2-1
Final	
Brazil vs Ghana	2-1

Last samba in Cairo

On their third attempt, Brazil finally broke Ghana's iron hold over the Under-17s World Cup. The football is over, but the dancing has only just begun, **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** reports

On Sunday, Brazil and Ghana gathered under the brilliant lights and the deafening incoming flights that criss-cross the sky above Cairo Stadium to play the final match of the U-17 World Championship in front of a crowd of almost 90,000 fans.

Both teams had changed their strip for the match. Brazil reverted to their favourite national colours, yellow and blue, while Ghana donned a brand new white outfit, in line with the white wrist-bands they had been wearing for earlier games, but very different from the yellow one in which they had twice before romped to victory in this competition. White was supposed to be a good omen for the Africans, but things didn't quite work out the way they had planned.

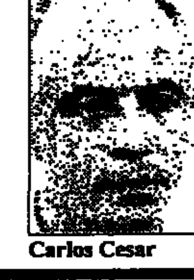
To go by the two teams' form in the competition, the result looked completely unpredictable. In the absence of any scientific evidence as to who the likely winners might be, the local fans were forced to fall back on instinct and favouritism to determine who they would support. Egyptian instincts are more predictable than the game of football, and if the cup was to be won by the supporters, then it was obvious from the outset that it would be going to Brazil.

The Egyptian press photographers also seemed to share this belief, and stationed themselves and their heavy equipment directly behind the Ghanaian goal in anticipation of the action to follow. But the scoring opened at the other end of the pitch, when Ghana took the lead in the 38th minute. Afiyie Owusu managed to break through the Brazilian defence and plant the ball firmly in the back of the net. Throughout the first half, Ghana dominated the play, leaving Brazil to make what they could of the counter-attack. A staunch defence and an alert goalkeeper succeeded in blocking the Latin Americans' attempts, and the scene seemed to be set for a repeat of earlier exercises in African domination.

In the second half, afraid of missing out on the next phase of the Ghanain onslaught, the photographers turned their backs on their initial favourites, and stayed where they were, behind what was now the Brazilian net. This treachery was their second mistake of the evening, for which they were to be amply punished. Brazil re-emerged after the interval with new fire in their bellies, and soon the shots began to rain in on the Ghanaian goal with almost alarming profligacy. The sure hands of the Ghanaian goalkeeper, Boateng Osei, were left to parry four successive shots after the defence had collapsed before him, and a fifth came back off the underside of the cross bar, leading to claims for a goal from the Brazilian coach, Carlos Cesar - but in vain. Frustrated despite the fire-power they had managed to train on their opponents, the Brazilian team were growing visibly more and more desperate to break free of the Ghanaian spell that has so often held them back in this competition. At last, in the 18th minute, Manuzalem Silva equalised from a well-organised counter attack. However, almost straightaway, disaster seemed to strike, as Fabio Pinto was sent off by referee Hauge Terje for kicking a Ghanian player in the head. Brazil were thus left with only ten players, having lost one of their best strikers. Yet this handicap only redoubled Brazil's determination to win. Ghana, for the first time, slowed their game, and Brazil were able to go on the attack. In the 42nd minute, Ronaldo Moreira passed the ball to Andrey Mayr who dispatched a violent shot "together with a prayer", as he revealed after the match — and the cup was Brazil's. Ghana's hold on the competition had finally been broken.

That night, there were no rules or regimens to follow. Reliable sources report that the celebration samba that began on the field after the final whistle blew was still going on at the team's hotel the following morning!

All dancing the same dance



Carlos Cesar

For the first time in their history, Brazil rose above their arch-rivals Ghana to win the U-17 World Cup, writes **Abeer Anwar**. In the past, Brazil had at best drawn, at worst lost, to the Africans — most agonisingly in the finals of Ecuador '95 — but this time they were determined to take their revenge.

Since the beginning of the tournament, fans, spectators and experts alike all predicted that Brazil and Ghana would meet in the final, and on Sunday this predicition came true. But all these futurologists, both amateur and professional, had also predicted that Ghana would win the cup for the third time. Their certainty infuriated the Brazilian coach, Carlos Cesar, who had begun planning for the showdown with Ghana long ago. He started training his team for the competition two-and-a-half years ago and since the beginning has focused on the question of endurance. The Ghanaians, he says, are "physically stronger. It was my dream to crush Ghana and break down their black magic, especially since I was sure that their players are older than 17." This time the dream came true, and survival was not for the fittest, but for the most talented.

But first they had to get there. Brazil made it to the finals, making it look easy: they beat Austria 7-0, the USA 3-0, Oman 4-1, Argentina 2-0 and Germany 4-0.

Then, at last, Cesar could use his long experience of the international game to lay a trap for the Ghanaians. Brazil lost one of their best players, Fabio Pinto — who went on nevertheless to win the silver ball and the bronze shoe with a total of 4 goals in the competition — to a red card in the 76th minute of the match, but they still pulled it off. "The match was very hard and we were down to 10 men against such a strong team, but we had the stronger heart," Cesar commented. Brazil was not on top form in the first half, and they were down 1-0 after 45 minutes, but Cesar told his players that the match was not yet lost. "We have 45 minutes, enough time to change our destiny," he said. As a result, they came out fighting, determined to secure at least a draw. Pinto's sending off also helped galvanise his team-mates into action after their pace had slowed and their game had become more defensive. "Don't get nervous, stay calm. With 10 players, we can still win," Cesar told them, and his words certainly seem to have had the required effect, for the team went on to score their second goal and win the match 2-1.

Thus Brazil was at last able to assert its supremacy in junior as well as senior football. Pinto afterwards expressed his great sadness at having been sent off at a crucial moment: "I kicked the Ghanaian player because he was kicking me all the time, when no one could see. It is the first time I have ever hit out or hurt anybody, but he really got on my nerves."

Cesar's only comment on Pinto's absence was that, "if he had stayed on, we would have scored three or four goals, not just two." He prefered to dwell on how happy he was to have won: "It is the first time we have won this cup. We won the under-20s and the seniors cup, but this is much more important, as these *players will provide the seeds* for a *strong national* team for years to come".

As for the players, they will return home after this long tournament to play once again for their clubs. But their coach believes that the best way to keep them progressing as a team is to take them to the Under-20 World Cup. "They are a group of players who fully understand each other", he said. "They all dance the same dance".

To add to the Brazilians happiness, Ronaldo Moreira, who started playing football at the age of 8, was named man of the match. In addition, two of their players, Jorginho Castro and Ferrugem Ramos, were chosen by FIFA for the U-17 All-Star Team on the basis of their excellent performance throughout the tournament. The Brazilians also distinguished themselves by keeping the cleanest sheet in Egypt '97: they conceded only two goals in six matches.

A team player

E. K. Afranie

While Brazil danced, Ghana cried. The memory of victory in Ecuador two years ago only served to remind them of their failure — the victory they were not celebrating tonight, reports **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab**.

After his team's defeat in the final, Emanuel Kwasi Afranie felt so deeply wounded, he was unable to give a press conference. But he summoned up enough courage to send his congratulations to the Brazilian team on their performance. They had won every one of their matches on the way to the final round, and for that reason alone they deserved the cup. But he added: "My team played better than Brazil throughout the match — in performing skill, talent, speed and fitness — but there were dozens of wasted goals and missed shots." He ascribed their defeat to a mistake by the defence, whose rigour throughout the better part of the match slackened fatally towards the end.

In the course of their six matches, Ghana *scored fourteen goals* and conceded five. They had fourteen yellow cards and one red card. They also became famous for wasting more opportunities than they converted.

In Group D, they drew with Argentina, then beat Bahrain 5-1 and Costa Rica 2-0. In the quarter-finals, they beat Oman, who had come second in group C, 4-1. In the semi-finals, they had a narrow 2-1 victory over Spain.

This was their third appearance in the final of a U-17 World Championship, following two famous victories in '91 and '95. They are ranked no 2 in the world by FIFA's under-17 rankings. They had met Brazil twice before, once in the 1991 World Championship, when they beat them 3-2 in the final, and again in a friendly match in the United States, when they won 2-0.

After their triumph in Ecuador '95, Ghana sent its then under-15 team, the future under-17 team, to a special academy, where they were given intensive training and assured of a healthy diet for two years. "They swore they would win and keep the cup for Ghana, and for Africa. They have failed to keep that promise," said Afranie. He emphasised above all the pity he felt for the young players. "They feel ashamed to go home. They can't face their parents, neighbours and fellow countrymen," he said.

Emanuel Kwasi Afranie, Ghana's head coach, did not have a particularly distinguished career as a player. Indeed, his desire was always to be a coach. By profession he is a physical education teacher. But his love of coaching took him to a soccer coaching course in Germany in 1976, and thence to university. He has the English FA badge and the A licence. He has also attended Coca-Cola coaching courses and followed all the CAF programmes. When his studies were over, he returned to Ghana and began coaching teams at all levels: under-17, under-20, under-23 (Olympic Team) and seniors. He also trains coaches.

One of his hallmarks is that he works with a squad of 18 players. In the course of this year's championship in Cairo, everyone in the squad got to play, no one was left sitting on the bench. "We play a team game, not an individual game," he says, "so I depend on them all." Even if his team has disappointed, his skill in spotting individual talent and helping it to flourish has been vindicated, however: two players from Ghana's Egypt '97 squad, Attram Godwin and Afriyie Owusu, have been chosen for the FIFA U-17 All-Star Team.

A Spaniard in the works

The German machine was stalled in fourth place, as Spain beat them 2-1 in a lacklustre play-off. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports

It is the final match in *any tournament which inevitably grabs* the limelight, pushing its predecessor which decides who comes third and fourth into the shade. For once, when Germany and Spain met last Sunday at Cairo Stadium, this obscurity was fully merited. Two strong teams who had come to the championship hoping to reach the final were left to squabble dispiritedly over third place.

Germany's best position to date in a junior world championship was second place to Nigeria in 1985. This year they had beaten Mali 4-3 in the quarter-finals, before losing their semi-final 4-0 to Brazil. Spain, having come first in Group B, had gone on to beat Egypt 2-1 in the quarter-final but were then defeated 2-1 in the semi-finals by Ghana, thus forfeiting their chance of reaching *the final for* the second time. The first time had been in 1991, when they had lost to the Africans 1-0.

Both teams were visibly in low spirits, and seemed intent on turning in performances that were barely workman-like. However, Spain seemed on balance more interested in winning than Germany, who erected their usual strong defense and then sat back They ventured out only for the occasional cautious attacks down the flanks, relying on their traditional crosses into the *box to put them on goal. However Spain's coach, Juan San*tisteban Troyano, was ready for this tactic. The Spanish left and right wings blocked any movement down the sides and forced the Germans to shift the focus of their attacks to the centre of the field for the first time in this tournament. Not only did the Spaniards manage to contain what there was of a German attack, but they also put them under increasing pressure with their agile passing and sudden forays towards their opponents' goal.

The first half started out slowly and only picked up after the first 20 minutes. Then in the 29th minute, Spain's Ander Lucena made an extraordinary run the full length of the pitch from one penalty area to the other, to beat four defenders and plant the ball in the back of the German net. Spurred into action by this goal, the German team strove to inject a little life into their game, but the Spaniards responded by marking them even more tightly than before. Silvio Adzic for Germany had a golden opportunity to score from the centre of the penalty area, but only managed to strike the cross bar. Towards the end of the first half, Troyano replaced Ivan Zurita with Miguel Rego, who had soon made two — unsuccessful — shots on goal.

In the second half, Germany enjoyed more possession, but Spain still managed to outpace them. Both teams were quick at attack and counter-attack, and strong in defence. It was only when the Salvadorian referee Rodriguez Victorino gave a penalty against Spain in the 14th minute that Silvio Adzic was able to equalise from the spot.

One might have thought that at this point there would have been a game on — but not at all. If anything, the football that followed was even more lacklustre than that which went before, until about half way through the second period both teams seemed to run out of ideas and began to resort to rough play. However, even violence was unable to overcome tedium, or improve the scoreline. Then after 41 minutes, in a world devoid of even poetic justice, *victory finally came Spain's* way, via an almost inevitable penalty. Francisco Sousa managed to strike the ball straight at the German goalie's hands, but it rebounded, and the lucky Sousa was able to put the winning goal away on his second try, much to the amazement of everyone present, both players and fans.



Top scorer

Spain's David Rodriguez was the top scorer in the U-17 World Championship with seven goals. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports

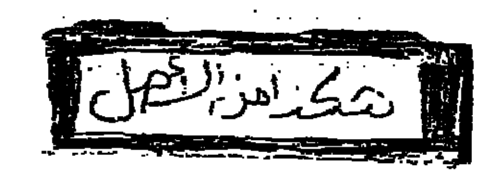
David Rodriguez, Spain's No. 10, plays centre forward with Real Madrid juniors, where he *likes to spend his time ... scoring goals!* Indeed, the best part of his training is spent practising shooting at goal from all angles. Although he is devoted to his studies at engineering school, which are also time-consuming, he manages to juggle his two ambitions successfully. Many Egyptian youngsters feel they have to choose one or the other, but David has the exceptional motivation required to combine both. Watching Real Madrid's senior stars in training and playing spurs him on to hope one day he may be just like them. His coach, Juan Troyano, describes him as "a promising young striker", who may develop into a top senior scorer too, if he continues as he has begun.

It is not only talent and dedication that have made Rodriguez what he is, but also his perseverance which can be seen quite clearly on the field. David did not score either of the two goals against Germany which earned Spain third place, as he was too closely marked, but nevertheless he did manage to take most of the Spanish shots on the German goal, and in the five matches he played in Egypt '97, he scored seven goals. He is very good at turning with the ball and running at opponents, and his quick-wits help him know when to steal the chance to shoot. He is fast too. His preferred method is to try and get to the very centre of the penalty area and shoot from there.

In the semi-final between Spain and Ghana, David was not included in the team due to an injury. Many of his team-mates consider this was a key factor in their defeat. "We had some very strange bad luck," said David, "we were expected to reach the final, and we played with that aim, but we sustained injuries at crucial moments."

It was clear how tired the young player was as he struggled to mount the stand to receive the Top Scorer trophy from FIFA President Joao Havilange. Though he was delighted with that award, his team could only celebrate third place, thinking all the time: "We should have done better."

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**



The Black Jewel

Brazilian sports minister and former soccer superstar, Pele, was in Egypt for the closing days of the World Championship. **Inas Mazhar** met him — and found out where he got that name



It was a fantastic reception. More than 50,000 spectators stood to greet football legend Pele when he entered the main VIP tribune at the Cairo Stadium, minutes before the final game of the tournament kicked off. As Egypt's guest of honour returned their welcome, waving and smiling, the crowd cheered, whistled and repeated his name over and over again.

Pele was obviously moved by this show of affection, and at half-time he stayed to chat with supporters and sign autographs, instead of joining the other VIPs in the lounge.

FIFA officials, however, had refused an Egyptian proposal that Pele share in the distribution of the medals, on the grounds that he was Egypt's guest of honour, not FIFA's, and so he left the stadium before the final whistle, having seen Brazil score their winning goal.

Pele had a very busy schedule during his four-day tour of Egypt, which was sponsored by MasterCard. He began by visiting Ahli's ground in Gezira, where a festival had been organised under the slogan: "Achieve your dream".

There, he met more than 70 Egyptian youngsters and their coaches. After watching them train for a while, the "Black Jewel" spoke to them, offering his advice as a fellow footballer. "Soccer is the world's most popular game", he reminded them. "In order to succeed and achieve fame, you have to love football, train hard, follow your coaches' instructions, play fairly and with discipline. You have to dedicate your life to the game."

Speaking to reporters afterwards, Pele admitted that he did not know much about the Egyptian system of national competitions. However, even an outsider could not miss the obvious progress of the Egyptian game over the last decade.

"On all my previous visits to Egypt, whether as a player or as an official, I have enjoyed being here and appreciated the generosity and hospitality of the Egyptians," he confided to the *Weekly*. "I have also noticed that Egyptian players have the same instinctive talent as all African players. However, they lack the physical fitness and the experience of others, especially the Europeans and the Latin Americans. If these other factors could be improved, Egyptian football would really take off."

The Brazilian sports minister went on to stress how important it was to change and improve the local system of competitions, so as to allow clubs to gain *more experience of foreign football through direct* contact: "The local competition system is usually the main reason behind the success or failure of the national team. Obviously, the failure of the Egyptian national team to qualify for the finals of the World Cup is due to defects in that system."

Turning futurologist, Pele *predicted* that Africa would soon come to dominate international soccer. "There are so many good teams in Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon have proved themselves at the highest international level. With their instinctive talent and top-flight performance, they have gained the respect of the world. African football *will* soon overpower Europe and Latin America."

When you ask the greatest hero world football has ever known how you should address him, he smiles modestly and says: "I prefer Pele. This is the only name I know, though it is not my real name. I have still not got used to hearing the word "minister". Whenever someone calls out "minister! minister!" I turn round and wonder who they are calling: Is there a minister here?" In another star such shyness might seem false, but with Pele it is clearly genuine.

The real name of the "Black Jewel" is Edisson Arantes Dona Semento. He was playing football with some kids in the street one day, when suddenly he made a mistake. The others all yelled at him: "Oh Pele! Pele!" He hated the name (which means "baldy", in Portuguese — a generic insult, not a comment on the young boy's hairline), and told them not to call him that again, because his name was Edisson. But no one listened and the name stuck. Now, he has come to love it: but how many of his fans around the world suspect the real meaning of their hero's name?

As to why Brazil has been such a dominant footballing nation over the years, Pele puts this down to his compatriots' love of the game. Football is a way of life for Brazilians. Everyone plays it everywhere. Yet even in *Brazil*, today there is corruption creeping into the game, which could undermine its future.

"The game is in a sorry state," said the sports minister. "Spectator turn-out is very low. Recently, only 3,000 spectators came to see a very important game at the Markana Stadium, which is the biggest stadium in the world, seating 200,000 people! At another match, the famous club Flamenco wore black shirts in protest at the corruption now surrounding the game in Brazil."

Just before he came to Cairo, Pele submitted a bill to the Brazilian Congress that would radically restructure the rules and regulations governing *football clubs*. The most *radical* change is the proposed elimination of the reserve clause, which ties players to clubs. Under the proposed changes, players not under contract would become free agents two years after the law was passed. Currently, players are free only if they are over 32-years-old and have spent more than 10 years at a single club.

Professional teams and club executives would face legal penalties for malfeasance, and sports tribunals, which are currently made up of state federation presidents, would be composed of players, club officials and delegates from the Brazilian Bar Association.

The bill also proposes a controversial change in the status of referees, who would be authorised to form companies and hire out their services to federations. Havelange has said that this change would violate FIFA statutes which require referees to be subordinate to the federations.

However, these new rules are *unlikely* to be implemented in the near future. The government did not ask Congress to treat the bill as a matter of urgency, which means it may get bogged down and spend years at the committee stage.

Soccer analysts have also criticised some of the proposed changes, especially one that gives all clubs equal weight in the elections for the presidents of state soccer federations. The current law favours those clubs which are traditionally higher-ranked.

FIFA President Joao Havelange has threatened to impose sanctions against Brazil and exclude them from the 1998 World Cup if the restructuring goes ahead. However Pele the minister, like Pele the footballer of old, remains undaunted: "I am working to restructure the game, and I have a green light from the president of Brazil to do so. FIFA has nothing to do with it. It is an internal affair."


photo: Nasr Ibrahim

Inas Mazhar was happy to meet her childhood hero. And Pele's reaction? "I always thought women journalists were very calm!"


photos: Ayman Ibrahim


The Brazilian minister for sports offering inspiration to Egyptian youngsters in a special training session at the Ahli ground

For the good of the game

FIFA has declared 21 September International Fair Play Day. The annual celebration was marked in Cairo with a round-*table discussion and a little* help from a living legend

photos: Mohamed Mosaad

Spain's Sergio (left) receives the Golden Ball from Sir Bobby Charlton


Sir Bobby standing between the referees of the final match

As part of the festivities surrounding the U-17 World Championship, FIFA invited Sir Bobby Charlton to attend the final match of the tournament and take part in the distribution of medals, in particular the *Fair Play trophy*. *Sir Bobby, reports* **Inas Mazhar**, was a natural choice for such an occasion, as one of the most remarkable players in the history of the game. Not only did he have an outstanding career, culminating in 1966 when he led the English team to victory in the World Cup, but in the course of over 700 matches at first division and international level he was never once shown *either* a yellow or a red card.

On Sunday morning, before the last two games of the tournament, Sir Bobby found time to head the line up for a round-table discussion on fair play at the CAF headquarters, alongside Keith Cooper, FIFA's director of communications. Many referees and coaches, *as well as members* of the press, were also present to take part in the debate.

Sir Bobby began by talking about his own career: "I was always for fair play, even before people began talking about it so much. No one taught us how to play fair in those days. But I always knew how far to go, because I loved the game. I always stepped back and stopped myself *from* arguing with the referee, or insulting another player or even a spectator. I always felt I had a great responsibility towards the fans, that I was there to entertain them."

But the England striker also stressed that he was no saint, and that he saw how times had changed. "If I was playing nowadays, I'm sure I would be shown a card or two. The game has become very rough. Today's defenders are much tougher in their approach. But," he added with a smile, "I was always happy to see a defender coming towards me then, and I still would be today."

Sir Bobby offered his own advice on fair play, directed particularly to youngsters. "To play fair, you have to play to win. If you win the game fairly, you will feel good by yourself and the fans will feel good too. You have to respect your opponents. You have to be able to lose with dignity and win with dignity as well." Young players need to know the rules so they can follow them, but they also need to have *figures* they can admire and look up to in the senior game. "People always remember fair play. That's why the most famous players are respected and remembered."

As for disputing decisions given by officials, Sir Bobby recalled the *advice* he had received himself as a young lad: "Players should never argue with the referee. Never. I remember when I was 15, my coach Jimmy Murphy told me never to argue the toss, because referees never change their minds. I also can't see why players physically get hold of the referee or come on to him with some act in order to try and influence him."

As for physical violence in all its forms, he was categorical: "Fighting is another sport. It has nothing to do with football. The player or the team who starts a fight is being unfair to the fans. They are denying the public the entertainment they came to watch, which they've paid for."

This point led on to a heated discussion among those present on the way in which players nowadays celebrate their goals. To some, this outpouring of feeling seems unnatural and exagerated. Even Sir Bobby, who has had more goals to celebrate than most, expressed reservations. "Every one has the right to celebrate a victory," he agreed. But dancing to the fans, running to the stands and climbing into the audience, or dancing in front of your opponents' bench — these are overreactions. Not only do they waste time, but they also seek to humiliate the other team."

A very British sentiment, perhaps — how many people in Ghana or Brazil would agree? And wasn't it the English who adopted the "Mexican wave" as virtually a second national sport? But surprisingly, most of those taking part in the discussion sided with Sir Bobby on this point, and wanted to know how such spontaneous overflow of feeling could be restrained, or even banned.

Terje Hauge, a Norwegian referee, went even further: "We always find ourselves in a difficult situation when it comes to celebrations. It is a waste of time. Sometimes it is clear, when a player steps off the pitch or takes off his shirt and waves it, that he should be shown the yellow card. But it's hard for the referee to do that, when he knows not only that the fans will shout and yell at him, but that next day he will be blamed for the decision in all the media."

If Hauge felt that in some cases a verbal warning was sufficient — special occasions such as a decisive goal in the match or a personal or club record for the player — he was adamant that in general such behaviour should not be tolerated.

Keith Cooper stressed the *major* role coaches have to play in guiding young players and educating them in the spirit and rules of fair play. *He pointed to the example set by the Argentinian* team in Egypt '97, for which they had been awarded the FIFA Fair Play Trophy. "Their coach, Jose Pekerman, has had a great influence. He cares more about the game and about entertaining people, than about winning or losing," said Cooper.

Sir Bobby agreed with the FIFA Communications Director, but he also sounded a note of realism: "Some national associations would replace their coach if he cared more about fair play than about results. They want to win games at any cost, and they can find coaches who agree with them."

It was Sir Bobby who summed up the discussion in his own *words*: "Though I don't play anymore, I still watch the game because I love it, and I want to see it played fair. I want to watch a good game — a fair game — not just for myself, but because football is the people's game."

Cooper then presented a set of precepts which FIFA has drawn up to encourage fair play, which he called "ten rules for the good of the game". *They are as follows:*

Play to win: Winning is the object of playing any game. Never set out to lose. If you do not play to win, you are cheating your opponents, deceiving those who are watching, and also fooling yourself. Never give up against stronger opponents, and never relent against weaker ones. It is an insult to any opponent to play at less than full strength. Play to win, right up till the final whistle.

Play fair: Winning is without value if victory has been achieved unfairly or dishonestly. Cheating is easy, but it brings no pleasure. Playing fair requires courage and character. It is also more satisfying. Fair play always has its reward, even when the game is lost. Playing fair earns you respect, while cheats are detested. Remember, it's only a game, and games are pointless unless played fairly.

Observe the laws of the game: All games need rules to guide them. Without rules, there would be chaos. The rules of football are simple and easy to learn. Make an effort to learn them, so that you understand the game better. This makes you a better player. It is just as important to understand the spirit of the rules. They are designed to make the game fun to play and and fun to watch. By sticking to the rules, you will enjoy the game more.

Respect opponents, teammates, referees, officials and spectators: Fair play means respect. Without opponents, there can be no game. They have the same rights as you have, including the right to be respected. Your teammates are your colleagues. You form a team in which all members are equal. Referees are there to maintain discipline and fair play. Always *accept their decisions* without arguing, *and help them to help* you enjoy the game more. Officials are also part of the game and must be respected accordingly. Spectators give the game its atmosphere. They want to see the game played fairly, but must also behave fairly themselves.

Accept defeat with dignity: Nobody wins all the time. You win some, you lose some. Learn to lose graciously. Don't seek excuses for defeat. The real reasons will always be self-evident. Congratulate the winners with good grace. Don't blame the referee or anyone else. Determine to do better next time. Good losers earn more respect than bad winners.

Promote the interests of football: Football is the world's greatest game. But it needs your help to keep it that way. Put football's interests before your own. Think how your actions may affect the image of the game. Talk about the positive things in the game. Encourage other people to watch it. Help others to get as much fun from football as you do. Be an ambassador for the game.

Reject corruption, drugs, racism, violence and other dangers to our sport: Football's huge popularity sometimes makes it vulnerable to negative outside interests. Watch out for attempts to tempt you into cheating or using drugs. Drugs have no place in football or any other sport or in our society. Say No to Drugs.

Help kick racism out of football. Treat all players and everyone else equally, regardless of their skin colour or origins. Show that football does not want violence, even from your own fans. Football is sport, and sport is peace.

Help others to resist corrupting pressures: You may hear that teammates or other people you know are being tempted to cheat in some way. They need your help. Don't hesitate to stand by them. *Give them the strength to resist. Remind them of their* commitment to their teammates and to the game itself. Form a block of solidarity, like a solid defence on the field of play.

Denounce those who attempt to discredit our sport: Don't be ashamed to show up anybody who you are sure is trying to make others cheat. It's better to expose them and have them removed before they can do any damage. It often takes more courage to denounce what is wrong, than to go along with a dishonest plan. Your honesty will be admired but your complicity will not. Don't just say No. Denounce the culprits who are trying to spoil our sport before they can persuade somebody else to say Yes.

Honour those who defend football's good reputation: The good name of football has survived because the vast majority of people who love the game are honest and fair. Sometimes somebody does something exceptional that deserves our special recognition. They should be honoured and their fine example made public. This encourages others to *act in the* same way. Help promote football's image by publicising its good deeds.



photo: Randa Shaath

Shahinda Maklad:

A cause, a widow, a village: all in vain?

The good earth

On the way to Shahinda Maklad's home in Nasr City, you drive along wide boulevards cluttered with the towering cubical apartment buildings that characterise the ungainly architecture of Cairo's sprawling middle-class suburbs. Here, like elsewhere in the city, every spare inch of space is painstakingly utilised — yet the width of the streets contrasts sharply with the dense blocks of concrete. Disrupting the monotonous pattern of faded grey and drab beige, the odd fast food façade in bright orange and red adds a discordant note to the ambient dreariness.

Shahinda is out of place in this setting. It is in the countryside that her greatest battles have been fought. But Nasr City is perhaps appropriate in this era of liberalisation, foreign investment and the freeing of land sale and rental prices, at a time when a controversial agrarian law is soon to be implemented. Hailed by landlords as economically sound, the law has been opposed by tenant farmers, who fear that soaring rents will squeeze them right out of the market. So how does Shahinda — the peasant rights activist from the Menoufiya village of Kamshish, whose name has been inextricably associated with agrarian reforms — fit into the picture? The secretary of the left-wing Tagammu' Party Peasants' Committee, has her life's work became a relic of a socialist past, now deemed inefficient and obsolete?

Buried amidst the massive housing complexes, the building where Shahinda lives is indistinguishable from the surrounding, equally amorphous high-rises — confirming the neighbourhood's climate of social anonymity. But Shahinda herself seems untouched by the alien urban setting. A beautiful woman with high cheekbones and delicately chiseled features, she ushered us into her apartment with an exuberance that could only come from the village.

"Questions of land reform never lose their relevance," she said, getting straight to the point and expressing herself with the ease of a woman long used to fighting and speaking out in public. She does not talk about herself for now. "What we are talking about is access to land It is crucial for tenant farmers to rent the land at a price that will enable them to make a living, therefore rents have to be regulated and controlled. Otherwise: the peasants will lose the land along with everything else — their livelihood and their identity. For what is identity, including national identity, but the feeling of belonging to the land?

On the living room wall, alongside other paintings, hangs a charcoal sketch of Salah Hussein, Shahinda's late husband. It portrays a bright-eyed, smiling young man in a *galabiya*. A leader of the movement calling for the enforcement of land reforms since the revolution — under a regime which drew most of its legitimacy from the promise that it would redistribute land — Hussein was murdered in Kamshish, on 30 April 1966. The Fiqi family, a powerful clan of landlords, were implicated. Hussein, who had built a strong grassroots base among the peasants during his lifetime, became a national hero after his death.

"Salah was the son of my father's sister and I admired him from ever since I can remember," recounted Shahinda. "He became the hero of my childhood when he fought in the 1948 war in Palestine."

Raised by a nationalist father whom she revered, Shahinda's political education started early. While other children read comic strips, Shahinda learned about the nationalist struggle in Egypt and the loss of Palestine. "My father, Abdel-Hamid Shawki Maklad, was a progressive police officer who practised his politics at home. Unlike many intellectuals who used feminism as a conveniently fashionable slogan, my father really believed in gender equality, and throughout my youth I felt as free as my brothers."

Abdel-Hamid Maklad died in 1955. In his last and maybe most poignant piece of advice to his daughter, he enjoined her to "be ready to die in the defense of her beliefs". The outstanding courage and determination Shahinda showed throughout her life seem to originate from this axiom. "After my father's death," she reminisced, "I fought my first real battle over what, I believe, is the most essential form of personal freedom: the right to choose my own husband."

Shahinda and her childhood hero, Salah Hussein, had fallen in love. But her mother adamantly refused the match. Salah was poor and had been in and out of jail for organising the Kamshish peasants. Unafraid of frequent arrests and jail sentences, to Shahinda he symbolised the ideal of a courageous and committed activist. Determined to marry the man she loved, the 17-year-old secretly packed her bags and chose a convenient day to flee Kamshish and join Salah in Alexandria.

Even after Shahinda and Salah got married, her family still tried to separate them. "They wanted a conventional middle-class marriage, embellished with all the usual material trappings. We had none of that." The young couple lived in a modest flat, furnished with a bed, a sofa and a stove — a "modern" appliance that Salah initially refused to buy, regarding it as a sign of conspicuous consumption. "Salah wanted to live his life exactly like the *fellahin*. He believed that adopting a different life-style would alienate him from village reality. I agreed, but at the end of the day I succumbed and bought a stove — just to make life a little easier."

Shahinda and Salah's marriage defied convention because it was singularly centred on political work. "Our home was like a revolutionary cell. We were forever planning meetings, writing articles and reports or organising around some struggle." Organising was new to the young woman, but the peasants' cause had been her own since the days of her childhood and found a deep resonance within her. "Although I never owned land or worked on the land, I have always felt that my life was with the poor peasants," explained Shahinda.

Her official political career started in 1958. She was 19. The government had organised elections to constitute the committees of the National Union (NU), that were to allocate 50 per cent of their seats to the workers and peasants. In Kamshish the peasants' campaign platform included the demand that the government implement land reforms by reviewing the landholdings of the Fiqis, who owned most of the village. "They had circumvented the law limiting land ownership by transferring their land deeds to their entire clan. As a result, policies of confiscation and redistribution were never implemented," recalled Shahinda. "Our job was to change these conditions."

The villagers had nominated Shahinda to run in the NU elections as one of their candidates. A charismatic and eloquent speaker, the young woman posed a threat to the Fiqis, who had her arrested on trumped-up charges on the eve of the elections. "They accused me of planning to kill the mayor if he refused to vote for me! But their strategy naturally backfired," said Shahinda, who was elected.

In her search for political allies in the land reform struggle, Shahinda tried to enlist the support of the NU's women's committee. "I met with Fatma Anan, the official in charge and told her about the situation in Kamshish. She gave me a blank stare and said: "My daughter, such things don't concern us women. Why don't you go back to your village and clean up the streets instead?"

It took Shahinda and her committee three years of hard work to have the land reforms enforced in Kamshish. In 1961, the Fiqis' holdings were finally confiscated and the land was redistributed to the poor. "This was one of the most memorable days in my life," recalls Shahinda. The entire village came out to demonstrate their joy and for the first time in the history of Kamshish, women actually led the demonstration. But the landlords didn't lose gracefully. Before leaving, they burned their crops, leaving nothing but the bare land behind. "Still we rejoiced; we had come to the end of the tunnel — or so we thought."

For Shahinda, the worst was yet to come — although the future looked bright at the time. She worked with her committee to provide basic services to the community, pressuring the state to turn the Fiqis' mansions into schools and clinics. Salah, who understood that the former landlords had maintained their power base through high-level connections, sought to outmanoeuvre them. He managed to reach the president. In a letter addressed to Nasser, Salah cautioned him that the political power of the landowning class remained intact — despite the country's social transformation. "The Fiqis killed him because of this letter. Salah had reached the executive at the highest level and that was too dangerous. They had to murder him," Shahinda states.

"The day Salah was martyred, he had gone to Kamshish. I had a feeling that something was going to happen. 'Take care of yourself, Salah,' were the last words I spoke to him. He laughed it off, saying: 'Don't worry, the feudalists' bullets can't kill me.' I stayed up late that night, waiting for him. Then at about midnight my cousin Nabil came, and somehow I understood. I knew that Salah had died."

Salah Hussein was buried on 1 May 1966. As the whole village came out for the burial procession, many people cried — grieving over the death of their comrade. But Shahinda would have none of it. "I told them that I didn't want anybody to cry at Salah's funeral. I said that his funeral should be made into a demonstration, instead of a day of mourning — so that Salah's spirit would live on. And it happened, this day became a political event in Kamshish — and every year on 30 April, we commemorate Salah's death by organising a huge peasant conference."

How did she find the strength to prevent people from crying, how did she manage not to cry at her husband's funeral? "I didn't want them to feel defeated, I didn't want to feel defeated." Shahinda shows me pictures of herself in mourning, taken shortly after Salah's death. "I don't recognise myself in them," she says softly. I see a young woman wearing a black veil, her features drawn, her eyes wide open, full of sorrow — but still strong, undaunted.

That Shahinda still shows today. But in retrospect, was the struggle worth it? "On 30 April, we had our annual conference at the headquarters of the Tagammu' Party — 5,000 people attended. The old people from Kamshish came, but also a younger, educated, self-confident generation. Seeing them all, young and old peasants — militant, vibrant, ready to fight for their rights and their land, I felt that Salah's death had not been in vain." Shahinda's voice breaks. For the first time, there are tears in her eyes.

"Do you still miss him?"

"Yes."

Profile by ***Fayza Rady***

